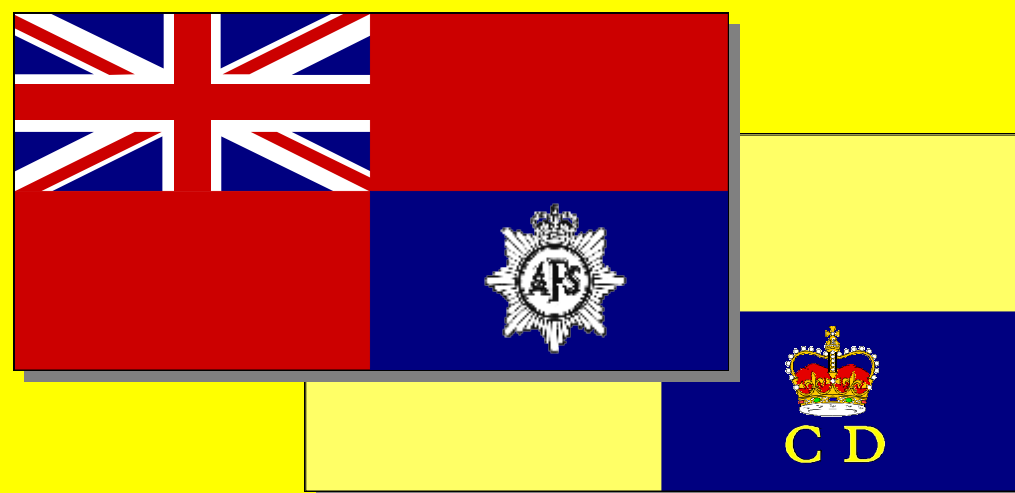
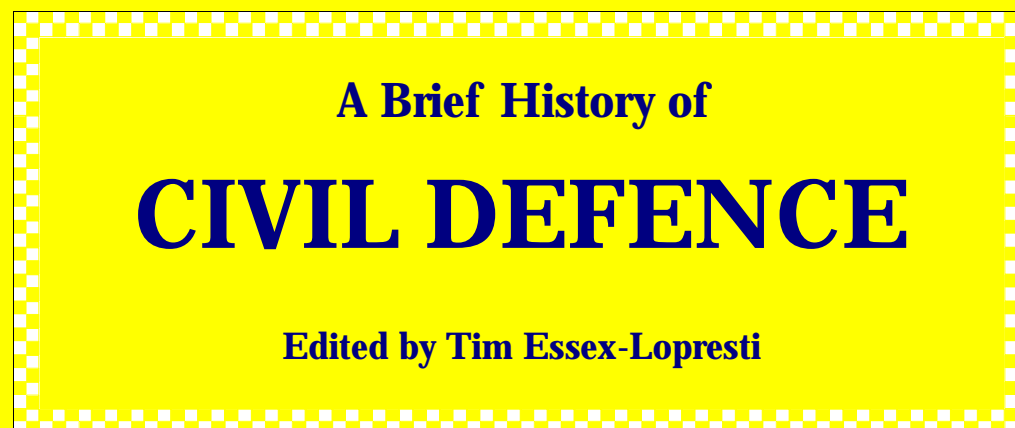
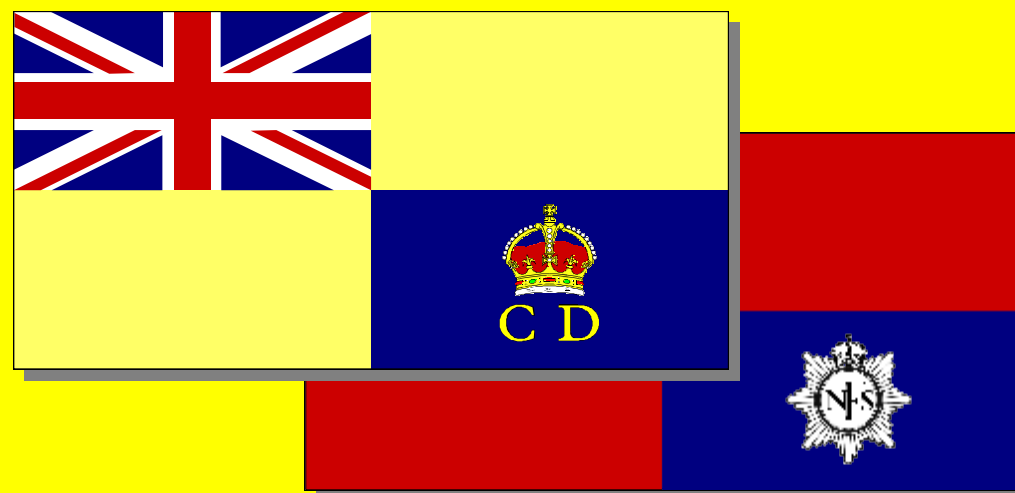




£5.00



# A Brief History of CIVIL DEFENCE



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by the Civil Defence Association  
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Derbyshire DE4 3TD

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(with pictures in lower resolution) at [www.civildefenceassociation.org.uk](http://www.civildefenceassociation.org.uk)

The editor and chapter authors assert the moral right to be identified as  
the authors of this work.

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### **Robin Woolven**

Retired RAF Officer, researcher into the history of the civilian population during WWII London, PhD from King's College, London, and regular contributor to the Civil Defence Association Journal.

## Definition of Civil Defence

Civil Defence is defined as being the preparation for and actual non-combatant assistance to individuals, groups or communities in need of immediate assistance as a result of natural or man-made events whether large or small whether war be declared or not. The assistance may include, but is not limited to, Rescue, Firefighting, Search, First Aid, Shelter, Feeding, Communication, Nursing, Counselling and Befriending. It also includes the activities of organisation and support of assistance in these and similar areas.

## Sources of Further Information

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The Fourth Arm, Civil Defence in Britain, 1948-1968, Jim Aitken, Publish and be Dammed, ISBN 1-905059-00-0  
They Rode the Green Engines, Alan House, ISBN 0-9526938 7 9  
Civil Defence Book of Remembrance, can be viewed in The Chapel at the National Memorial Arboretum

### Places to Visit

CD Memorial, The National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire  
Eden Camp, Malton, North Yorkshire  
Hack Green Nuclear Bunker, Nantwich, Cheshire  
Kelvedon Hatch Nuclear Bunker, Kelvedon Hall Lane, Brentwood CM14 5TL

### Websites - (see also Chapter 9)

Civil Defence Association - [www.civildefenceassociation.org.uk](http://www.civildefenceassociation.org.uk)  
Eden Camp - [www.edencamp.co.uk](http://www.edencamp.co.uk)  
Hack Green Nuclear Bunker - [www.hackgreen.co.uk](http://www.hackgreen.co.uk)  
Kelvedon Hatch Nuclear Bunker - [www.japar.demon.co.uk](http://www.japar.demon.co.uk)  
The Dickin Medal - [www.pdsa.org.uk](http://www.pdsa.org.uk)  
George Cross Database - [www.gc-database.co.uk](http://www.gc-database.co.uk)  
Isle of Man public information 'Be Alert but not Alarmed' download from:  
[www.gov.im/lib/docs/dha/civildefencepublicwarningleaflet.pdf](http://www.gov.im/lib/docs/dha/civildefencepublicwarningleaflet.pdf)

### Back Cover:

Civil Defence Memorial stone at The National Memorial Arboretum  
Picture: J A Essex-Lopresti

## A Brief History of Civil Defence

Edited by Tim Essex-Lopresti

## Contents

Chapter	Author	Page
Introduction		3
Foreword	Lord Renton	5
1 Pre-WWII Preparations	Robin Woolven	7
2 Civil Defence in WWII	Robin Woolven	12
3 Fire Services in WWII	Alan House	23
4 1945 Stand-Down	Robin Woolven	32
5 Civil Defence Corps 1949-68	Eric Alley	35
6 Auxiliary Fire Service 1949-68	Alan House	46
7 1968 Stand-Down	Frank Raine-Allen	53
8 Civilian Animals	Tim Essex-Lopresti	59
9 Civil Defence Today	Graham Whitehead	65
10 The Future	Tim Essex-Lopresti	73
Sources of Further Information		76
About the Authors	Inside back cover	

**CIVIL DEFENCE ASSOCIATION**



Associated Newspapers



The coffin of Sir Winston Churchill, with Grenadier Guard Bearers being carried up the River Thames, heading for the Festival Hall Pier, on the Port of London Survey Boat 'Havengore'.

In the lower picture the dockside cranes can be seen dipping in salute as RAF jets fly overhead.

Associated Newspapers

affect the UK badly. In recent months we have seen severe flooding in Boscastle in Devon and Carlisle in Cumbria. Both of these were affected a relatively small area and the Emergency Services – with support from military helicopters in particular – were able to cope.

However, it would only take a combination of circumstances such as cold weather and failure of electricity supplies over a significant area to cause great problems. Central heating systems would not function, supermarkets could not operate their check-outs, communications would probably be overloaded and cease to work. None of this results, directly, from the action of man.

If malevolent man were involved one can imagine the effects of a 'Lockerbie' plane crash on a major city.

### Preparedness

The Government, at the date of this publication, is embarking on a programme of vehicle and equipment issue to Fire and Rescue Services to assist them to deal with major incidents resulting from terrorist activity and natural or industrial disaster. This includes vehicles and equipment for public mass decontamination, urban search and rescue and high volume water pumping. Contracts for purpose built vehicles have been placed and the issue of some has started. New training facilities are also to be provided at selected Fire and Rescue training locations.

### What can we, as individuals, do?

Firstly we can try to look after our own safety and that of our families. We can try to remember to note routes of escape both at home and when we are out and about. This can become second nature and will raise our self-confidence in our ability to look after ourselves and our families.

Secondly we can undertake some basic training in first aid. This can be a formal course through Red Cross or St. John Ambulance. Even observing and learning from TV or books is better than nothing.

Thirdly we can keep our eyes open as we walk around the neighbourhood where we live, work or visit regularly. What are the possible risks? What could you do to help your family and neighbours? Who is likely to be the local leader that you could help?

The one thing that we can be sure of is that, one day, trouble will strike our community. Whether the cause is nature or man-made we cannot foretell. The Government, quite rightly, is aiming to increase the resilience of and within the community. Surely this must come from within each community and we must not rely totally on help from outside. The Scouts gave great assistance as messengers in WWII and, no doubt, would do so again so we can take heed of their motto and 'Be Prepared'.





The scene at Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire during the East Coast Flood disaster of 1953. The flood-affected area extended all the way down the East Coast of England including the Thames Estuary. Holland was also affected badly.

Associated Newspapers



Kamala Beach, Phuket Island, Thailand, on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2004. The tsunami waters have gone but have left chaos and death behind. The effects were felt across much of the Indian Ocean

Associated Newspapers

## Introduction

We all need heroes. When I was young, just after WWII, it was too fresh so we looked further back to such as Admiral Lord Nelson, Francis Drake, Boadicea, Livingstone, Columbus etc. The events which caught our imaginations included the Charge of The Light Brigade, The Battle of Omdurman, The Afghan Wars, Gallipoli, Agincourt and Trafalgar. With the books being published in the 1950's our attention was drawn back to WWII and its heroes such as Douglas Bader, Stirling, Aude Wingate and Montgomery. We even learnt respect for Rommel. Colditz Castle, Dunkirk and Normandy and their stories became familiar but all of these involved the Military. Even 'The Man Who Never Was', that amazing tale of deception made into a film, though the silent hero was a civilian when he died, was part of a military operation. The death and magnificent state funeral in 1965 of Sir Winston Churchill ensured that his name would remain at the top of our list of heroes.

It was only when the story of The Second Great Siege of Malta and some details of the privations and the determination of the ordinary people of that small Mediterranean Island became public and that they had been awarded the George Cross did we begin to realise that there were many civilian men and women, both here in the UK and elsewhere, who were also heroes - just leading ordinary lives in times of extreme difficulty.

This book outlines their story. It is a tribute from today's civil defenders to the 1,900,000 Civil Defenders of WWII and to the nearly 7,000 who died as a result of enemy action. It is hoped that it will help to perpetuate their memory and their volunteer spirit. There are many people who ask their neighbour 'Can I help?' but we could all do more. There are many who join a wide range of volunteer groups today but more volunteers are needed. As the Government rightly tells us, we live in dangerous times whether this be as a result of earthquakes, global warming, unseasonal weather patterns, terrorism or crime. However, they do not tell us how we can help each other when the full-time emergency services become overloaded.

As John F Kennedy, while President of the USA, said 'Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country'.

I am very grateful to the members of the Civil Defence Association who have written the chapters of this book. Each of them is an expert in their field. I am also grateful to Associated Newspapers for allowing me free run of their photograph archive, the Imperial War Museum and to members of the CDA who supplied photographs from their family albums and information from their personal experiences.

Finally, the CDA is grateful to the Home Front Recall Lottery Fund for their financial grant which has enabled copies of this booklet to be printed as part of our contribution to the celebrations surrounding the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of WWII.

Tim Essex-Lopresti  
Editor, March 2005



**Sir John Hodsoll CB**

Hodsoll Family

Sir John Hodsoll is often referred to as 'The Father of Civil Defence'. After retiring from the RAF in 1935 he was appointed Assistant Under Secretary of State at the Home Office directly responsible for the newly created Air Raid Precautions Department. By 1938, at or near, the time of the Munich crisis, his work with the Department had shown the need for the public to be made more keenly aware of the problems likely to affect them. It was obvious that time was, as he put it, 'running out like the tide', and his energy and drive were geared to widening and intensifying the role of his Department.

He was promoted to the Office of Inspector General of all Air Raid Precautions Services, the Home Office Departmental administration being taken over by hands he had trained. From then until the end of the Second World War he worked ceaselessly for those engaged in Civil Defence.

At the end of the Second World War in 1945, the Civil Defence Services were disbanded, but he could see clearly the need for maintaining the expertise in this field, and his voice was heard time and again warning of the futility of disbandment. When the Civil Defence Corps was formed in 1948, due largely to the threat posed by atomic weapons, he was appointed Director General of Civil Defence Training, and he was instrumental in building up a service designed to withstand the attacks then thought possible.

He continued in this capacity until 1954 when, retiring once more, he was persuaded to take on the more onerous and difficult task of Chief Civil Defence Adviser to NATO, being directly responsible for the Civil Emergency Planning section.

## 10. The Future - Tim Essex-Lopresti

Since work started on this book there have been two major events which, hopefully, will affect Civil Defence positively both here in the UK and around the world.

### New Legislation

The first was the passing into UK law of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. This Act replaced 11 Acts dating from 1920 – 2002 completely and parts of a further 24. The aim is to ensure better planning for co-ordination between Government, Local Authorities, the Emergency Services, the NHS and the suppliers of electricity, gas, water, communications and transport and, of course, the military. It provides also for 'information to the public'. Concern has been expressed that Local Authorities can now alter / reduce the amount of money (effectively the number of staff) and are not required to liaise with organisations of volunteers or organise their own. David Blunkett (then Home Secretary), during the consultation period, made mention of the arrangements that he had in mind for 'Gatekeepers' – Wardens by another name – who would act as the links between the community on the ground and their Local Authority. This idea was widely welcomed – but is not mentioned in the Act. A leaflet 'Preparing for Emergencies' has been issued to every household in the country and is a welcome start. The Isle of Man (who still have a Civil Defence Corps) have a better version 'Be Alert but not Alarmed' - see page 76. Meanwhile, the Territorial Army has been selecting volunteers to form a Civil Contingency Reaction Force (CCRF) available to be called out in support within 24 hours. The plan is for each of the 11 Regional Brigades to have one or two CCRF's each of 500 volunteers.

### Nature Unleashed

The second event was the tsunami in the Indian Ocean on Boxing Day 2004 which drew attention to just how powerful nature can be. To illustrate the scale of the impact there were 60,595 UK civilians killed in the 5½ years of WWII. At the time of writing the estimate of the tsunami casualties was over 300,000. Had there been some rudimentary form of Civil Defence warning system in place then the numbers killed, especially in Sri Lanka and India, could well have been far lower.

### Will Disaster Happen Here?

To say that the UK's chances of being hit by something similar are low may well be true but we are told that we suffered a tsunami when part of Norway slipped into the North Sea in ancient times. The North Sea floods of 1953 were from a similar phenomenon. We are told that part of the Canary Islands, off the West Coast of Africa, is very unstable and slippage cause a tsunami which would

3. The *other 'Civil Defence role'* organisations category contains a selection of the many and varied voluntary bodies who undertake work for the community. They too, are listed in alphabetical order:

Age Concern	<a href="http://www.ageconcern.org.uk">www.ageconcern.org.uk</a>
Charities Disasters Recovery Network	<a href="http://www.charitylogistics.org/cdrn">www.charitylogistics.org/cdrn</a>
Cadet Organisations, Army, Air & Sea	<a href="http://www.mod.uk">www.mod.uk</a>
CRUSE-Bereavement Care	<a href="http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk">www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk</a>
Disaster Action	<a href="http://www.disasteraction.org.uk">www.disasteraction.org.uk</a>
Girl Guides	<a href="http://www.girlguiding.org.uk">www.girlguiding.org.uk</a>
Help the Aged	
Local Community groups	
Local Youth groups	
National Centre for Volunteering	<a href="http://www.volunteering.org.uk">www.volunteering.org.uk</a>
National Council for Voluntary Organisations	<a href="http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk">www.ncvo-vol.org.uk</a>
Neighbourhood Watch	<a href="http://www.neighbourhoodwatch.net">www.neighbourhoodwatch.net</a>
Samaritans	<a href="http://www.samaritans.org">www.samaritans.org</a>
Scout Association	<a href="http://www.scouts.org.uk">www.scouts.org.uk</a>
Women's Institute	<a href="http://www.womens-institute.co.uk">www.womens-institute.co.uk</a>

At the beginning of the twenty first century, when western society has, in general, changed radically from a community-centred basis of earlier times to one much more fragmented and materialist, it is heartening to report that one facet of UK society has not changed – that of the entirely selfless humanitarian work for others given by many thousands of citizens who donate freely of their time and with no thought of reward or recognition. A lot of the work they do is unsung, certainly not at all 'glamorous', sometimes dirty and dangerous, and occasionally downright unpleasant. But one thing unites all these volunteers – the will and determination to care for others in less fortunate circumstances. That is, and always has been, the essence of Civil Defence Volunteering. Long may it continue!

**The Rt Hon the Lord Renton, KBE, QC, TD, DL**



January 2005

## **FOREWORD**

World War II lasted in Europe from September 1939 until April 1945. In Britain, the civilian population, which was largely indefensible, suffered severely but Civil Defence played a vital part in protecting the people and in saving many of those who had been injured. Altogether in the United Kingdom, 60,595 civilians were killed in air raids, and thousands were injured, some very seriously.

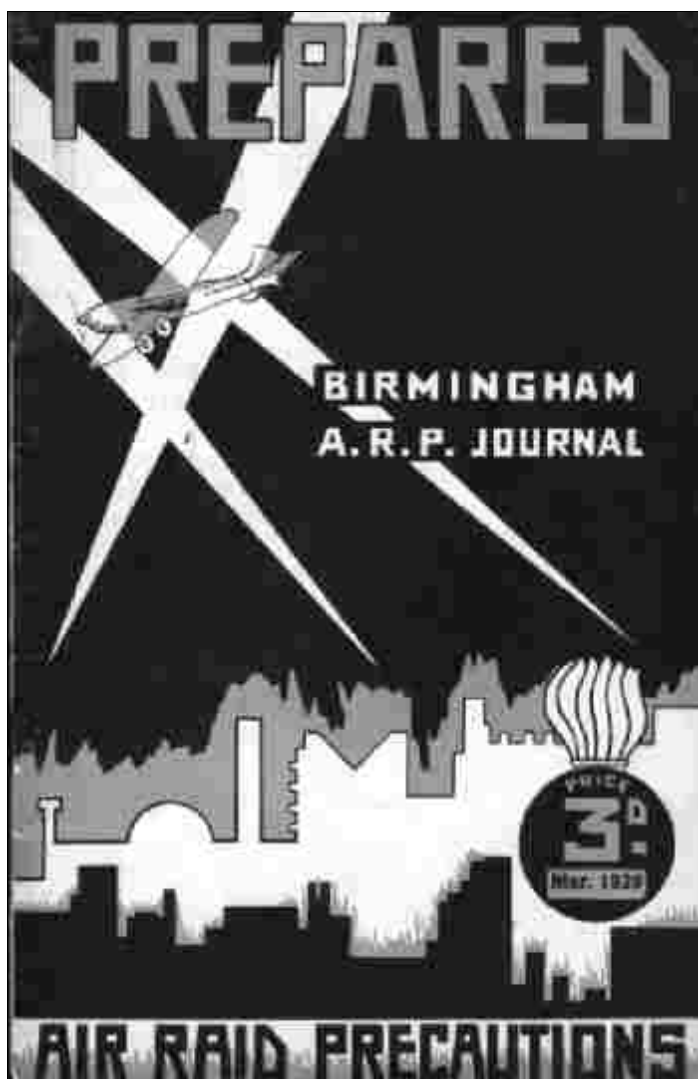
I served in the Royal Artillery (Anti-Aircraft) in the Battle of Britain of 1940 in South East England and was deeply worried by the casualties suffered by civilians, especially women and children. From 1942 to 1945 I served overseas.

However, from December 1957 until July 1962 as a Home Office Minister, one of my responsibilities was Civil Defence, and by then it covered almost any kind of danger to our people.

Fortunately, the Civil Defence Corps and Auxiliary Fire Service survived until 1968. Since then, vital work has been done in protecting and serving all of our people in various informal ways, encouraged splendidly by our Civil Defence Association. Long may that last successfully!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'David Renton'.





As early as January 1939 this publication appeared each month giving information about the state of Civil Defence preparations in Birmingham. By March it was reporting that over 10,000 Wardens and 6,000 AFS personnel had been enrolled and their training well advanced. It also reported that the census of people living in each Warden's Post area was almost complete and many thousands of gas masks issued.

### Sky Watch Community Air Service

Sky Watch pilots routinely carry out air observation flights on behalf of the community, looking out for people or property at risk and reporting any incidents to Air Traffic Control for a 999 call to the Emergency Services. It operates over 150 aircraft including light aircraft, microlights, gyrocopters and a few helicopters. Qualified pilots donate their time and aircraft free of charge. Reports from Sky Watch aircraft have been acknowledged by the Emergency Services as helping to secure the 'Golden hour', the first vital 60 minutes when saving life or other incident is most effective. It is not an emergency service, its role is simply to 'observe and report' and then clear the area as soon as the Emergency Services have the matter in hand. Although most pilots work independently, the greater proportion operate as Community Air Service Units (CASUs) based either at small air strips or airfields.

[www.skywatch.org.uk](http://www.skywatch.org.uk)



Jabiru light aircraft typical of those used by Skywatch

G. Whitehead

### Women's Royal Voluntary Service

Founded in 1938 as the 'Womens Voluntary Service for Civil Defence'. Today, WRVS members provide a variety of services including Meals on Wheels to elderly and housebound citizens; emergency feeding teams during and following a major incident providing food and drinks to emergency workers and persons evacuated to rest centres; rest centre management; hospital shops; in-patient book service plus a host of other social welfare activities.

[www.wrvs.org.uk](http://www.wrvs.org.uk)



**RAPID UK.** Volunteers provide a search and rescue capability in the UK and overseas. Each team includes a doctor or medic plus specialists selected for the particular disaster e.g. cave, mountain, rescue dogs etc.

[www.rapidsar.org.uk](http://www.rapidsar.org.uk)

**UKFSSART.** The United Kingdom Fire Service Search and Rescue Team provide an international search and rescue facility for the UK Government and is on call 24 hours-a-day, 365 days-a-year to respond to an accident or disaster anywhere in the world. The team is composed of firefighters and other specialist rescue personnel working within the emergency services of the United Kingdom.

[www.ukfssart.org.uk](http://www.ukfssart.org.uk)

### **Royal National Lifeboat Institution**

The RNLI operate a 24-hour lifeboat search and rescue service to 50 miles out from the coast of the UK and Eire, and a beach lifeguard service on 57 beaches in South West England. Since its founding in 1824, lifeboats have saved over 136,000 lives. Today there are 232 lifeboat stations strategically placed around the coast with an active fleet of 331 lifeboats.

[www.rnli.org.uk](http://www.rnli.org.uk)

### **St. John Ambulance**

St. John Ambulance volunteers provide first aid posts and teams at a host of public events. In addition they are able to support the Emergency Services (particularly the Ambulance Service) following a major incident. In recent years they have teamed up with a number of Ambulance Service Trusts to create 'Neighbourhood First Responder Units'. As mentioned earlier, this scheme aims to support the Ambulance Service by providing pre-hospital care for neighbours in villages, residential areas of towns, industrial estates and shopping centres. The aim is not to replace the Ambulance Service, but ensure that, in circumstances such as cardiac arrest, defibrillation and other lifesaving techniques can be undertaken as soon as possible, maximising the casualty's chances of survival, until the emergency ambulance arrives.

[www.sja.org.uk](http://www.sja.org.uk)

### **Salvation Army**

The Salvation Army is well known for its work amongst the homeless and destitute. What is not so well recognised is the very practical support it is able to provide both during and following emergencies. These include emergency feeding, food distribution, shelter, clothing distribution, counselling (spiritual ministry), mortuary assistance, family rehabilitation, provision of furniture, bedding and other household needs.

[www.salvationarmy.org.uk](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk)

## **1. Pre-War Preparations - Robin Woolven**

### **The Great War Experience**

Amongst the new weapons developed and used with great effect during the First World War (1914-1918) were bomber aircraft and poison gas. In earlier wars British civilians had been many miles from the offensive action of the front lines but, between 1916 and 1918, British civilians in their own homes, schools and workplaces were subject to aerial bombardment. German Zeppelin airships, and then Gotha bombers, carried out a total of 103 bombing raids on the United Kingdom. London, in particular, made an attractive target for the bombers who attacked by day and night. Initially there were no special means of warning the public of air raids (other than policemen cycling around with 'Take Cover' notices) and there were no special air raid shelters. In all, some 1,413 British civilians were killed by German bombing of this country during the First World War and another 3,407 were injured. During the first of two big daylight raids on London in June and July 1917, two teachers and 16 children were killed when their school in Poplar was bombed. So, with these new weapons being used to great effect, governments realised that they would have to protect their civilian populations against such attacks in any future war.

### **A Slow Start**

Most British families had lost relatives in the army, navy and air force in what they hoped had been the 'War to End Wars' so people preferred not to think about having to prepare for another war. However, fascist governments in Germany, Italy and Japan, in the 1930s, demonstrated their ability and willingness to use modern bomber aircraft to drop High Explosive (HE), and incendiary (fire) bombs to great effect in conquering weaker nations. The Japanese bombed cities in China and both Germany and Italy took part in the Spanish Civil War while the Italians used poison gas bombs against tribesmen in their conquest of Abyssinia (now Ethiopia). Meanwhile, British governments felt that the British public still did not want to spend money on Air Raid Precautions (ARP) to protect them and their homes against air bombing. Aware of the dangers of an attack on Britain, successive British governments had, from 1924, quietly started preparing ARP measures and, in 1935, a separate department of the Home Office was set up. In July that year government policy was announced and local authorities were told that they would be responsible both for drawing up plans for public protection and for setting up ARP Services in their areas. Local authorities were thus made responsible for raising and running a range of ARP Services to train civilian volunteers for Stretcher Parties, First Aid Posts, Gas Decontamination Teams, Messengers (often teenagers, scouts or guides) and Rescue Parties. Both the local Fire Brigades and Ambulance Services were expanded and many 'Auxiliaries' were recruited and trained to support these local resources. Meanwhile, the government

had taken on the job of manufacturing respirators (gas masks) for all civilians but, at first, too few people volunteered to join their local ARP Services.

But thousands of volunteers were needed across the country and, in 1937, even more volunteers were required when it was decided that tens of thousands of 'Air Raid Wardens' were required – at a scale of one warden for every 500 civilians. The local authorities were unwilling to spend their money on ARP as they considered that central government should pay the bills. However, no money was made available until the ARP Act of late 1937 made the taking of ARP measures compulsory and the government agreed to pay between 60% (for the richer boroughs) and 75% (for the poorer boroughs) of the cost of approved ARP measures. So, by early 1938, ARP preparations were getting under way – but they had a long way to go before the British people could feel that they were adequately protected.

Bombing civilians was not illegal and the Royal Air Force had bombed Afghan and Iraqi tribesmen in their 'colonial policing' operations while thousands of people had been killed in the bombing of Chinese cities by the Japanese (1931-39). The Italian use of poison gas in Abyssinia (1935-36) and the complete destruction of undefended towns by German aircraft in Spanish Civil War (1936-39) warned the British people that they would probably be subject to such attacks in a few years. But the official assessments of the likely strength of an enemy bombing attack, regularly produced by the Air Ministry, were very pessimistic. Meanwhile, the fascist powers used bigger and faster aircraft to carry and drop bigger and more effective high explosive, gas and incendiary bombs – and these



Cartoons were frequently used in leaflets produced at this time. This one appeared in the Birmingham ARP monthly publication 'Prepared' of June 1939. It is understood that the artist, Norman Foster, featured regularly in the Birmingham newspapers. The Chief Librarian of the Birmingham Post & Mail reported that he died in June 2002. Sadly, we have not been able to trace his daughter to find out more about his work.



Briefing at the Humber Bridge. RAYNET supplied communications for the marshals for The Heart of Humberside cycle ride organised by the British Heart Foundation

B Middleton

#### The Missing Evacuees.

About two years ago I received a telephone call from the Civil Protection Unit at the Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue HQ asking me if I could go and set up a communication link from the village hall at Bardney that did not have a telephone. A fire involving fertilisers and possibly an unknown chemical had started on the old Bardney airfield. It was planned to evacuate some villages downwind.

On arrival I set up my equipment and established radio contact with the Civil Protection Control Room. I then reported to the person in charge of the rest centre to tell them we had a communications link to the CPU. All I had to do now was wait until the evacuees started to arrive. Food for them had been purchased from the local Co-op, which I suspect had its best day's trading for quite a while! I passed a few messages to control mainly about how many members of the support services were present. Time went by with no sign of the evacuees who were school children, though it was estimated that we should receive about three busloads.

However, the drivers of these buses knew the area like the back of their hands and were able to get the children to their homes in an unaffected area via a different route. It just goes to show that, no matter how carefully you plan, something happens to undo all the good work. But it was a good training exercise.

What happened to all that food? Well I did see some rather well-fed policemen around the area later on.

Barry Middleton G4DBS Group Controller, North Lincs Raynet Group

have willingly responded to these incidents as well as emergencies in mountains, fells and moorland. The Mountain Rescue Council is the governing body.

[www.mountain.rescue.org.uk](http://www.mountain.rescue.org.uk)

### **National Search and Rescue Dog Association**

The National Search and Rescue Dog Association is an 'umbrella' organisation for Air Scenting Search Dog Associations in the UK. Search dogs are trained to find missing persons by following scent which is carried in the air. Dogs work equally well in the dark and use their senses of smell and hearing to their fullest under these conditions. Search dog teams are usually called out by the Police for a wide range of incidents from lost walkers and climbers to missing children and possible victims of crime. In mountainous areas, search dogs work alongside Mountain Rescue Teams, whilst in urban or rural areas it is not uncommon for them to work directly for the Police as an autonomous unit.

[www.nsarda.org.uk](http://www.nsarda.org.uk)

### **National Voluntary Civil Aid Service (known as 'Civil Aid')**

Provide first aid and emergency preparedness training to members of the public. Some Units also undertake first aid cover at public events.

[http://mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk/civil\\_aid/home.htm](http://mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk/civil_aid/home.htm)

### **Radio Amateurs Emergency Network (RAYNET)**

RAYNET was formed in 1953 following the severe East Coast flooding. Today it provides a valuable supplementary communications resource of trained amateur radio operators at many events including major emergencies and disasters. Following the Kegworth Air Disaster which occurred on 8 January 1989, RAYNET resources were the only means by which the authorities could communicate for some hours, as the mobile telephone network had become overloaded and subsequently 'crashed'.

[www.raynet-uk.net/](http://www.raynet-uk.net/)

### **Rescue Organisations**

The UK has a number of volunteer rescue organisations. Probably the three best known are:

**International Rescue Corps.** An independent disaster rescue service whose teams undertake work both in the UK and overseas. Equipment carried by teams will vary according to the nature of the disaster and this may include thermal image cameras, sound detectors, fibre optic probes, and portable generators and lights.

[www.intrescue.org](http://www.intrescue.org)

bombing raids were reported in the newspapers and the weekly newsreels shown at the local cinemas

### **The Munich Crisis**

With this late start to preparations in the UK, little had been achieved by September 1938 when the 'Munich crisis' alarmed the nation as people feared that, as a result of the disagreement with Hitler over Czechoslovakia, Germany would open another world war with a massive bombing attack on Britain. Last minute preparations were started as miles of trenches were dug in public parks and squares for use as public air raid shelters. Over a few days, all citizens were measured for respirators (there were three sizes for adults) and no less than 38 million of these gas masks were issued to civilians across the country. But public support for the ARP Services increased dramatically over the week as the government admitted that the country was unprepared for war. A minister (Sir John Anderson MP) was appointed to speed up the ARP measures being taken. In case a bombing campaign or an invasion of the country broke communications with London, a new regional system of government was established with Regional Commissioners nominated to take over the government of the twelve regions into which England had been divided.

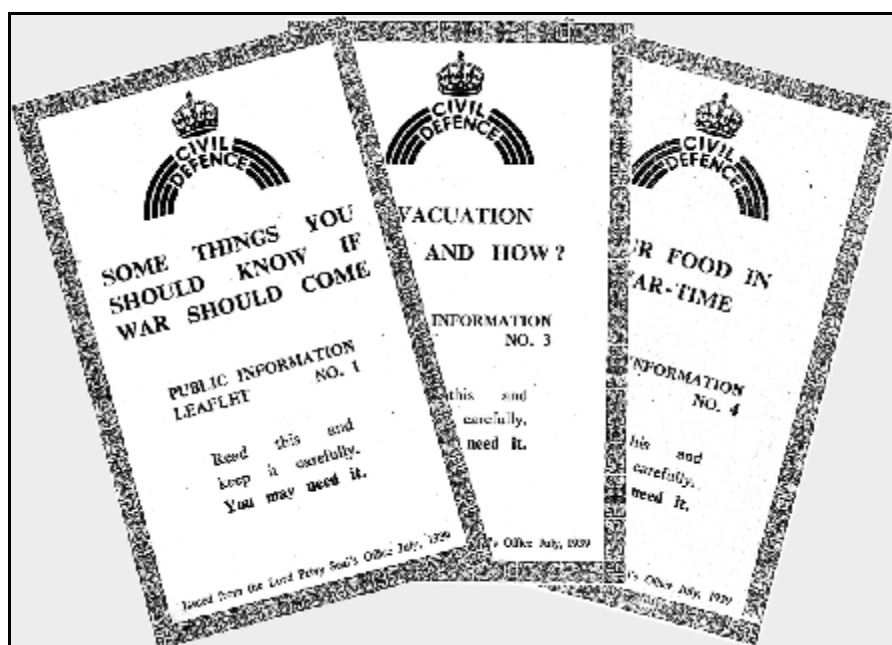
### **ARP Organisation and Preparations**

Each local authority (the counties and the boroughs) prepared a plan to protect their citizens and set up a local HQ where, under the leadership of their ARP Controller (normally the Town Clerk) local ARP Services were directed to local incidents. The Controller also had trained teams of people to identify poisonous war gases and, if gas were detected, further teams were trained and equipped to 'decontaminate' people and property by washing down people, streets and buildings with masses of water. The Munich crisis brought many more volunteers into the ARP Services and much more equipment was obtained for the Fire and Ambulance Services – coaches were to be used as emergency ambulances while, in London, black taxicabs were used as emergency fire engines to tow small water pumps to fires that might be started by a bombing attack. As numbers grew, exercises were held simulating the effects of severe gas and HE bombing raids so that fire, ambulance, stretcher parties, first aid and rescue teams were able to practise their skills. Where the number of volunteers was insufficient, local authorities were allowed to pay some men and women to make up the numbers of the ARP Services. The trench shelters dug at the time of Munich were found to be insufficient protection and, as the government did not want people to have to run to public parks in an air raid, they supplied householders with their own shelters. The corrugated iron 'Anderson' air raid shelters were erected in gardens while people without gardens were provided with brick public shelters with concrete roofs which were built in the streets.



By 1939 the government expected that the war would open with a 'knock-out blow' on the United Kingdom of 3,500 tons of bombs to be followed by 700 tons of bombs daily for weeks – and each ton of bombs was expected to cause 50 casualties, of which one third would be fatal. So an Emergency Hospital Service was set up and new hospitals opened while many city hospitals were closed to normal patients as they awaited the thousands of bombing casualties predicted. A further concern was the large numbers of psychiatric patients that were expected to result once a major bombing campaign was experienced.

Air Raid Precautions had now become the primary task of local authorities and the public's appetite for information on how best to protect themselves and their families was met by the government delivering brochures to every household on such topics as 'How to Prepare Your Home for ... A range of pocket books'. The newspapers, many of which had their own 'ARP Correspondents', produced special supplements and the tobacco companies produced sets of cigarette cards on ARP (see illustrations). With sufficient information, realistic training and frequent exercises, the local ARP Services used the year between the Munich crisis and the outbreak of war to good effect so that, by 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939, most local authorities and their ARP Services felt reasonably confident to deal with the expected 'knock out blow' from the air.



Some of the leaflets issued to the public in July 1939.

### British Red Cross Society

Assistance is provided ranging from the manning of first aid posts during an emergency to the staffing of a rest centre following a mass evacuation. In addition they provide a fire victim support service.

[www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk)

### Cave Rescue

Cave rescues in the UK are carried out by volunteer cave rescue organisations, each with its own teams, equipment, administration and geographical area of operations. Between them they provide nearly a thousand experienced cavers with specialised equipment, together with the organisational structure necessary to co-ordinate rescue operations. Each year, volunteers carry out around fifty underground rescues and attend other incidents and emergencies where their specialised expertise is requested by Police Forces. The governing body is the British Cave Rescue Council which was formed in 1967 with the objective of representing member organisations at national level, and promoting and assisting the exchange of information.

[www.bluedome.co.uk](http://www.bluedome.co.uk)

### Lowland Search & Rescue

There are currently twelve lowland search and rescue organisations within the Association of Lowland Search and Rescue (the 'umbrella body' for registered teams). Volunteers are mainly engaged in searches for missing persons which may include children, victims of crime and mentally confused patients. The areas covered can range from inner city, urban, rural to remote areas. Teams are trained to 'read' the ground. 'Mantracking' is one of their specialised skills which they are able to use to assist the Police. Hundreds of incidents are investigated each year, and happily the majority of missing individuals are found safe and well.

[www.alsar.org.uk](http://www.alsar.org.uk)

### Mountain Rescue

Voluntary Mountain Rescue Teams are autonomous bodies composed of volunteers who are called out by the Police or Coastguard when their services are required. Due to the variety of terrain, each team sets its own recruitment standards, but mostly applicants are selected from persons who are competent all weather mountaineers. They undergo training in search, stretcher handling on vertical faces and in snow and ice conditions, radio work and first aid. During the last few years there has been an upsurge in calls for help from motorists in wild and remote places who have become stranded in deep snow drifts. Volunteers





The Mayfield & Ellastone Community First Responder Group of Derbyshire with their emergency vehicle

D Holt

2. Details of the work undertaken by volunteers *in support* of the Emergency Services are given below. It is by no means exhaustive or complete but illustrates the very wide variety of activities undertaken by volunteers today. For ease of reference they are listed in alphabetical order:

### British Civil Defence

Originally founded as the 'Association of Pioneer Rescue Officers', BCD Officers provide a number of services to the authorities both in the UK and overseas. They include:

**International Emergency Technical Team.** Volunteers respond as Specialist Rapid Technical Aid Interventionists to overseas rapid onset emergencies. Technical Aid usually means supplying clean drinking water and other services vital to protecting refugees and displaced persons.

**International Search and Rescue Team.** The Team has been active in many all-hazard missions, and 247 have taken place since 1967. These involved such emergencies as major flooding, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and bomb attacks. It holds the distinction of being the first (in 1968) non-military rescue unit to operate a parachute and air-mobile section.

**National Animal Rescue Service.** 50,000 rescue missions have been undertaken since 1969 both in the UK and abroad.

**National Emergency Response Team.** The Team is capable of responding to emergencies in the UK utilising a variety of equipment including 4x4 ambulances, rescue boats, winches, diving gear, air shelters etc.

[www.britishcivildefence.org](http://www.britishcivildefence.org)



Taken in Essex in September 1939, these Wardens are ready for action.

Associated Newspapers



4 of a set of 48 cigarette cards illustrating the ARP Badge, Choosing a Refuge Room, Gas Mask and Stirrup Hand Pump.

R Woolven

## 2. Civil Defence in WWII - Robin Woolven

### The Phoney War

The feared 'knock out blow' did not arrive when war was declared on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939 although the air raid sirens sounded as the Prime Minister (Neville Chamberlain) broadcast to the country stating that we were at war with Germany. However those sirens were a false alarm and they opened the 'phoney war', a valuable year in which local ARP Services continued their training and gained more equipment. Meanwhile, the war on the continent got closer as the Germans, having first invaded Poland, advanced west through Holland, Belgium and France then across Denmark into Norway. In Britain, ARP Services felt reasonably confident that they would be able to deal with the threats for which they had been equipped and trained. Auxiliary Fire and Ambulance stations were set up in schools as many inner-city schools had been closed when their pupils and children had been 'evacuated' to country areas that were thought would be safer from bombing. When the expected bombing campaign had not started, many of those evacuated, including many mothers with babies, returned to their city homes only to be evacuated again when the real bombing campaigns started. Unfortunately, when the bombing had not opened with the declaration of war, some ARP services were cut back as some people and newspapers saw them to be 'standing around and doing nothing'.

But most British people believed that bombing was inevitable as they read newspaper reports and saw newsreel films of the German air force (the *Luftwaffe*) bombing and destroying European cities from Warsaw to Rotterdam in attacks which were seen as demonstrations of what might happen to British cities, and to London in particular. At first, for safety, cinemas and theatres were closed and football matches cancelled to prevent crowds presenting targets for enemy bombers and there was a general dusk to dawn 'blackout' across the country with all external lighting switched off by order – so road traffic accidents increased dramatically and, eventually, food, clothing and fuel was rationed. Meanwhile, families were advised to stock up with an emergency supply of tinned food, water, blankets and candles for lighting the gas-proof room they had been advised to prepare in their homes. Most families had relatives and friends in the armed forces or in the local ARP Services which often included youngsters of 16 years of age who were used as Messengers using their bicycles to deliver messages from Wardens at bomb incidents to the local ARP Headquarters. These local HQs were the operational base for the ARP Controller (generally either the Town Clerk or the Chief Constable) who, when he received reports of bomb incidents from his Wardens, directed the rescue, first aid and gas de-contamination parties to the scenes. If local resources were considered insufficient for the size of the incident, then the Controller could request support from surrounding boroughs while the Regional Commissioner's staff could call for help from other Regions.

## 9 Civil Defence Today - G.A. Whitehead

The contribution made by volunteers to Civil Defence activities did not end with the disbandment of government sponsored Civil Defence Volunteer forces in 1968.

Today a wide variety of voluntary organisations provide assistance to individuals, groups and communities in need of help as a result of natural or man made emergencies and disasters. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Communications
- Counselling and Befriending
- Feeding
- First Aid
- Firefighting
- Nursing
- Rescue
- Shelter

They can be divided roughly into three categories;

1. Volunteers working *directly alongside* the Emergency Services
2. Volunteers working *in support* of the Emergency Services, Local Authority Emergency Planning Officers and HM Coastguard
3. Volunteers who do not fit neatly into either 1. or 2. but nevertheless incorporate what can be classed a 'Civil Defence role', in their overall objectives.

To aid the reader in finding out more about the many and varied organisations described, a web site address is provided for most of the entries.

1. *Directly alongside* the Emergency Services include the **'Retained' Fire-fighters** of the Fire Services, **Special Constables** in Police Forces and the **Ambulance Service Community First Responder Scheme**.

While the first two are long established, the third is a recent development. The scheme aims to support the Ambulance Service by providing pre-hospital care for neighbours in villages, residential areas of towns, industrial estates and shopping centres in more remote locations. The aim is not to replace the Ambulance Service, but to ensure that, in circumstances such as cardiac arrest, defibrillation and other lifesaving techniques can be undertaken as soon as possible, maximising the casualty's chances of survival, until the emergency ambulance arrives. In many cases training is provided by organisations such as Red Cross or St John Ambulance.

### The Volunteers



Associated Newspapers

While searching through the Associated Newspapers archive I came across this picture which I could not resist. It is of 2 Civil Defence messengers at the night-time scene of a flying bomb, probably in London, early in 1945.

For me it sums up the spirit of the volunteer. They were keen and eager to do a useful and responsible job. Being out at night, despite the cold, it was an adventure with some danger (184 messengers died), working as part of a team and with moments of fun.

They appear to be friends who have met up over a cup of tea and are telling each other what they have been up to.

I am sure that they had many stories to tell their families down the years.

Tim Essex-Lopresti

As part of their preparations for war, the ARP Services were issued with Service gas masks and steel helmets ('tin hats') marked with their role. Thus W identified Wardens, SP was Stretcher Party, FAP First Aid Post etc. but it took many months before proper uniforms were issued to the ARP Services so they initially had to make do with a steel helmet and an armband to wear over their own clothes or overalls. The gas decontamination teams had special gas-tight and waterproof protective clothing and boots. The roles of the various ARP Services is obvious from their names but it is worth expanding on that of the ARP Warden who was the man or woman in contact with the public and with a good knowledge of who lived where in his area. Wardens patrolled their area from their ARP Post and, as well as reporting people who exposed lights breaking blackout regulations, they were to report the fall of bombs and to take control of the incident until the arrival of the police, rescue and stretcher parties and the fire brigade. They then advised who was likely to be trapped in the property. Wardens also advised survivors about the location of food and rest centres and other welfare facilities.

In April 1940, Sir John Anderson had appealed for an extra 250,000 part-time volunteers for the ARP Services. Competition for volunteers increased dramatically a month later when the government appealed for men to join the newly formed Local Defence Volunteers. By mid-July 1940, some 1,166,000 men had



11<sup>th</sup> January 1941, Subway outside the Bank of England, London  
2 Police, 1 WVS, 1 Home Guard & 45 others died.

H Cartwright Archive



volunteered for this force which became the Home Guard. Some 10% of trained male Civil Defence workers had left their ARP Services and this loss resulted in the government 'freezing' Rescue and First Aid manpower i.e. trained full-time (paid) workers were not permitted to leave their Services unless authorised. Simultaneously, the 'freezing' of part-time volunteers was considered but rejected. However, two months before the 'blitz' proper on London opened, the true volunteer nature of the ARP/CD Services started to change as manpower pressures increased. At that time some 12% of full-time and 16% of part-time ARP workers were women, this proportion rising to 18% in 1944 as more men were conscripted into the armed forces.

### The Blitz

The war got dramatically closer at the end of May 1940 when 300,000 British and allied troops were withdrawn to England from the beaches at Dunkirk and, with the Germans now using the airfields just across the English Channel on the French coast, this country awaited the attack. In the 'Battle of Britain', the Germans first attempted to wipe out the RAF fighter aircraft and airfields in southern England as a preparation for an invasion of this country, then launched their bombing attacks on British cities on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1940, known as 'Black Saturday'. The attack continued over three days and nights and was concentrated on the docks and surrounding areas of London where tens of thousands of people lived close to these

### The Dragon's Opponent



Fred Hards & the Earl of Suffolk GC

Charles Henry George Howard GC, Earl of Suffolk & Berkshire and his driver Fred Hards, along with his secretary, Beryl Marden, were all killed on Erith Marshes in Kent on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1941. They had been working on a booby trap device called the ZUS 40. The Earl worked for the Ministry of Supply as a Research Officer learning how to defuse bombs of new types. Churchill wrote in his memoirs that this team referred to themselves as 'The Holy Trinity' and continued by writing: 'But the thirty-fifth [bomb defusing] claimed its forfeit. Up went the Earl of Suffolk in his Holy Trinity. But we may be sure that, as for Mr. Valiant-for-trust, "all the trumpets sounded for them on the other side". Very quickly, but at heavy sacrifice of our noblest, the devotion of the UXB detachments mastered the peril.' Prior to this work he had been involved in bringing back a shipload of machine tools and diamonds from France from under the noses of the Germans as they advanced through France. His story was first told in Readers Digest, November 1969 and was the subject of the 1973 BBC TV programme 'The Dragon's Opponent' with Ronnie Pickup as The Earl.

into enemy held territory. One batch from the Portsmouth area went over to Normandy with the troops on D-Day and it was one of them that brought the first news back that the landing had been successful.

### Remembered Alongside

When the first national Civil Defence Memorial was set up at The National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas in Staffordshire it was decided that it would be only right to honour the animals who served alongside the humans so a smaller stone, donated by members of the National Animal Rescue Service, was erected next to the main memorial stone with the inscription:

CIVIL DEFENCE 1939-1945

REMEMBERING ALL THE ANIMAL FRIENDS

WHO SERVED WITH SUCH LOYALTY AND BRAVERY

Every year in November at the time of Remembrance a small posy of flowers is laid amongst the red poppies to all the animals and birds that suffered and died in the service of mankind in that conflict.

### The First Still Going

To bring the story right up to date it was reported in the press at the end of December 2004 that the St Bernard kennels at the Hospice of the Great St Bernard had been saved from closure. 33 local Swiss and Italian villages together with the St Bernard breeders' associations are to provide the funds. The dogs were said to have rescued over 2,500 people over the years and one, called Barry, saved about 40 lives in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of the dogs ever since has been called Barry in his honour and the new foundation is also to bear his name.

Birmingham Civil Defence Search and Rescue dogs, around 1960.



J Hunt archive



### CD Dickin Medal Dogs

**Irma**, an Alsatian, served with her owner Mrs Margaret Griffin in London and Essex. With Psyche, another Alsatian, they found 233 people of whom 21 were alive.

**Jet**, another Alsatian, also worked in London with Rescue Squads.

**Rex**, a third Alsatian, found himself locating casualties in burning buildings despite smoke and heat.

**Thorn**, also an Alsatian, showed great courage while searching in burning buildings.

**Peter**, a Collie, was another dog working in London locating victims under blitzed buildings.

**Rip** was a stray mongrel adopted and trained by a Rescue Team to find people trapped in bombed buildings.

**Beauty**, a Wire-Haired Terrier, worked alongside the Civil Defence squads. Her forte was finding trapped animals with his owner, PDSA Superintendent Bill Barnet. She saved 63 animals from being buried alive.

### Awards for Bravery

In 1943, the founder of The People's Dispensary for Sick Animals, Maria Dickin, introduced the Dickin Medal which very quickly became known as the 'Animal VC'. It is in bronze with the inscriptions 'For Gallantry' and 'We Also Serve'. Between 1943 and 1949, during WWII and its aftermath, the PDSA awarded 54 Dickin Medals for the display of conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty, while serving with the armed forces or Civil Defence, to 32 pigeons, 18 dogs, 3 horses and 1 cat - 'Simon', the mascot of HMS Amethyst, during the Yangtze Incident in China in 1949.

With 32 pigeons receiving the Dickin Medal we are reminded that many pigeon fanciers, including the King, supplied some 200,000 birds to bring messages back from Europe. Most didn't make it. As well as working for the Army, Navy and Air Force, many went with secret agents

targets. Hundreds of civilians were killed and thousands made homeless. Although the mostly volunteer ARP Services performed very well under this long awaited 'blitz', they were sometimes overwhelmed by the intensity of the high explosive (HE) and incendiary (fire) bomb attack. But plans had been made for mutual support of areas under stress and, during the blitz, firemen and other essential ARP Services (now known as Civil Defence) were reinforced from other parts of the country. The German attack soon spread to all of London (which was attacked on all but three nights for the next three months) and many other British cities. When the city of Coventry was badly bombed in mid-November 1940, many civil defenders came from London and other regions to support the local Services, a fitting response for those that had been down to support London on 'Black Saturday' some weeks earlier.

Working long days under difficult wartime conditions, people desperately needed a night's sleep. Many people, therefore, sought a place in air raid shelters where they could sleep. Shelter Wardens patrolled to ensure a peaceful night in the larger shelters. Most people had been provided with a place in an air raid shelter, ideally in 4 or 6 person steel Anderson shelters sunk in their gardens, or in 50 seat (or larger) brick surface shelters built in the roads. On some nights, seeking safety and sleep in spite of the noise of bombing overhead, the number of people taking refuge in the London Underground railway stations reached a maximum of 177,000. Here they were eventually provided with refreshment and toilet facilities and three-tier bunk-beds – but even at the maximum, this represented only 4% of London's population.. With many people spending their nights sleeping in shelters, the authorities provided refreshment facilities, often run by the ladies of the WVS – originally the Women's Voluntary Service for Air Raid Precautions. But many people decided not to go to the shelters and took refuge in their own homes, either in specially strengthened basements or under their own stairs and eventually a special form of air raid shelter (the Morrison) was provided. This was a sheet of steel on legs about 2½ feet tall which could be used as a table and inside which two adults and two children could crawl and sleep in relative safety for the night – the aim was to protect people if the house collapsed on the shelter. Many



Rescue in Southern England Note the improvised ambulance  
H Cartwright Archive



The Dickin Medal

PDSA



Beauty at work

PDSA archive

### The First George Crosses

The first civilian to receive the George Cross was Mr Thomas Alderson, a rescue party leader in Bridlington, Yorkshire, who several times in August 1940, had crawled under dangerous collapsed buildings where, in the presence of broken gas and water pipes, rescued many people trapped by the fallen debris. The two other recipients on the first list of George Cross awards were the army bomb disposal officers who dealt with the huge unexploded bomb (UXB) which lodged in St Paul's Cathedral in London.



Thomas Alderson GC T Hissey

acts of heroism under fire were carried out by ordinary members of the public and particularly by the ARP/CD Services so HM the King instituted a new medal, the **George Cross**, for great bravery. Many civil defence volunteers, particularly those involved in rescue, bomb disposal and fire fighting received the George Medal and other awards for their heroism in those desperate days. As the bombing campaign progressed, the Germans were dropping bigger and more powerful bombs so thousands of homes were destroyed and damaged and many thousands of people killed or seriously injured. On the nights when incendiary bombs were used to great effect, massive fires were started across our cities and these sometimes almost overwhelmed the fire fighters, particularly when water supplies for their hoses had been broken by the bombing. Many basements of destroyed houses were, therefore, used as emergency water supply basins and extra water pipes were laid into the cities. Powerful fire pumps were fixed on most London bridges to raise water from the River Thames, even at low tide.

In October 1940, the new Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison, acknowledged manpower gaps in the ARP Services and full-time (i.e. paid) ARP Wardens over the age of 30 were 'frozen' (i.e. not permitted to resign without permission) and by the end of the year, full-time members of the ARP Services were compulsorily enrolled as an alternative to joining the armed forces. This move marked the end of the voluntary principle in recruitment but, on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1941, Morrison insisted that voluntarism had not failed and he maintained that 'the amazing success of civil defence on a voluntary basis was one of the greatest successes in history.' Many of the younger, trained and experienced ARP workers were 'called up' to the forces or otherwise directed into industry which meant that there was a wide range of national services eager to welcome new recruits. The list from which (ideally!) the potential recruit could choose included the army, navy, air force,

### Our Guardians in War

All of this happens every day in peacetime. What about during WWII when so many towns and cities came under direct attack? It is absolutely certain that our pets carried on, in the main, just as if it were peacetime but with more fireworks. Their owners shared their own food with them when pet food was in short supply. They will have sensed when their owners were afraid and shared their worry and time in the Air Raid Shelters with them. Many died alongside their owners. Many were trapped alongside their owners and, by their voices, helped in their rescue. Above all, each one in its own way helped to keep up the spirit and morale of the population both individually and collectively.

### The Call-up

At an organised level, in 1942, the first War Dog School was started. By D-Day, 7,000 dogs had been trained for many jobs such as taking messages, sniffing out mines and locating people in bombed buildings. On a more positive note, many Regiments and ships have had mascots who have been greatly valued and kept morale high.



Alsatian dog assisting rescue workers, Wood Green, London, December 1944.

Associated Newspapers



### Animals in our Homes

In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and today the most common animals associated with us are our pets. Why do we keep them? Because we enjoy their company! We like to look after them and dogs, in particular, will often look after us in return. When young, many of us had small animals such as hamsters, gerbils or white mice. We may well have moved on to rabbits, fish and birds. All of these teach us something and, in their way, show us affection. But for real love from an animal we look to the cat and the dog. The argument about which will continue for as long as we are around. There are those who prefer cats and others who cannot stand them. Many will dismiss the cat and argue strongly in favour of one breed of dog or another. Whichever camp we fall into there are so many of us who would not wish to be without our favoured pet.

How many of us, whether young or not so young, find it comforting and relaxing to be in the company of our pet. Whether we are sad or worried our pet, even a cat, will come and ask to be stroked. We find that we feel better just by their touch. There are even pets who are taken into hospitals to cheer up the patients. We are told that time spent with them can lower blood pressure and speed recovery.

### Our Guardians in Peacetime

There are so many stories about the loyalty and courage of the dog. Hardly a week goes by without a report of a dog acting as a smoke detector, raising the alarm and saving its human family. We hear about dogs staying with their masters or mistresses who have been injured or lost or suffering from hypothermia when out in the countryside. There is a monument to such a dog close to the Derwent Dam in North Derbyshire. It is not as prominent as the one on the dam itself to the Dambuster pilots who trained there but it is just as poignant. There are many other such memorials to be found across our nation.

Even in our homes our dogs will try to protect us. They bark when someone comes to the door or tries to break in. These do not make the news but are commonplace. We do sometimes hear about those that defend us on the rare occasions that someone is daft enough to attack when out 'walking the dog'.

There are so many dogs who are trained to help those who need assistance whether it be as a guide dog for the blind or simply bringing the phone, TV remote control or other household items to its disabled owner. How a dog can be trained to recognise the onset of such as an epileptic 'fit' is beyond me – but they can. Many animals will try to raise the alarm and get help when their owner is unconscious after such as a fall or collapse at home even - without any training. It is just part of their instinct to help the leader of their pack.

police, wardens, firemen, fire watchers, rescue, first aid post, stretcher party and, last but not least, industry.

With widespread evacuation and large areas of destruction, the population of many urban areas dropped dramatically – several London boroughs were down to 50% of their 1938 level of population so the jobs that had to be done in the Civil Defence and Fire Prevention Services (the Fire Watchers) had to be manned from the men and women remaining in the cities. Each night of bombing resulted in death and destruction so that not only had the roads to be cleared and the gas and water mains repaired, but also welfare support had to be given to the injured and the homeless. If a house was destroyed by bombing the inhabitants had to be rehoused elsewhere and probably issued with new ration books, identity cards and



Tea Breaks - The Vital Ingredient!

Top Right: Westward TV  
Remainder: Associated Newspapers

(Clockwise from Top Left) A YMCA volunteer carries on serving during an air-raid in Dover in 1940; WVS mobile canteen in Deptford, London in 1940; Firemen having a break during the London Blitz in 1940; A Queen's Messenger mobile canteen van donated by America in The City of London in 1941.

some money to buy food – all duties carried out by the local authorities assisted by the range of voluntary organisations. During the blitz, the London area suffered 71 major attacks (raids in which over 100 tons of high explosive bombs were successfully aimed at the target), but many other cities were badly bombed. Liverpool, Plymouth and Birmingham each suffered 8 major raids, Bristol 6, Glasgow 5, Southampton 4, Hull, Manchester and Portsmouth 3 major raids each and many other cities had major raids, all of which severely tested the men and women of the ARP Services. Nevertheless, across the country, the civil defenders performed their often dangerous duties under fire with great credit and, equally importantly, the population did not riot or panic when faced with the death or injury of their families and colleagues or the destruction or damage of their homes. Although public morale sometimes dipped in heavy bombing raids, it did not fail as people generally adopted a ‘stiff upper lip’ attitude and insisting that they ‘could take it’, urging the government to retaliate by increasing the bombing of German cities.

### **The End of The Beginning**

Fortunately the ‘big blitz’ on Britain ended in May 1941 when most of the *Luftwaffe* bombers were transferred to the Russian front and there followed a period of some 2½ years when the German attack was restricted to occasional, but very destructive, bombing raids on British cities. The ARP/CD Services played their full part in the national effort, often after they had completed a full day’s war work. The CD Services had to be maintained although the blitz had finished as it was feared that the *Luftwaffe* bombers might return in force in reprisal for the massive bombing attacks on German cities being mounted by the RAF and the United States forces.

### **The Beginning of The End**

In early 1944 the *Luftwaffe* resumed bombing raids, known as the ‘baby blitz’ on the United Kingdom. By now the civil defence services were much smaller than at the time of the ‘big blitz’ of 1940-41 as many more men and women had been conscripted into the armed forces and millions of people had been drawn into the war industries to produce the weapons, ships and provide the food and fuel supplies to ensure the country’s survival. Making best use of limited resources the government formed a Civil Defence Reserve and set up a number of ‘Mobile Columns’ of civil defenders and their equipment which could be sent to whichever region came under heavy attack.

### **V1 & V2 Attacks**

By the time of the 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944 D-Day Allied invasion of the continent, the Germans had developed a new range of ‘reprisal weapons’, namely the pilot-less V1 flying bomb and the V2 long range ballistic rocket. These new offensives

## **8. Civilian Animals - Tim Essex-Lopresti**

As long as we have inhabited the earth we have been dependent upon animals in a wide variety of ways. The first service that they gave us was for food, both milk and meat, their skins for clothing and protection and bones and sinews for tools. It was not that long before cattle, horses, elephants and yaks started to be used for such as ploughing, pulling carts and for transport. At a more personal level animals came into our homes. We know about cats in ancient Egypt and elsewhere being worshipped as sacred beings and temple guardians. Dogs became our companions a long time ago. Dovecotes were common features in the countryside for centuries and falconry was a popular sport from Norman times. Dogs have also been used for many centuries to help us to find food as they are able to follow scents and run much faster than we can.

Wars could not have been pursued the way they were without animals. Hannibal had his elephants, desert conflicts used the camel, mountainous regions needed large numbers of pack animals and so on right up to World War II and in some cases until quite recently. Now we have the helicopter and the 4 x 4.

### **The First Call-up**

Probably the first organised Civil Defence service of animals was in the 12<sup>th</sup> century when the Augustinian monks developed the St Bernard breed for use as rescue dogs on the Great St Bernard Pass in the Alps on the Italian Swiss border. This breed has the distinction, along with the Newfoundland, of having, as its main objective, that of saving life. Those monks of 900 years ago were the fore-



St. Bernard

Author’s file

bears of today’s mountain rescue teams that work today in the more remote parts of the UK and elsewhere.

There is mention in the novels featuring Sherlock Holmes, that ace detective from 221B Baker Street, of Bloodhounds, with their exceedingly sensitive noses, being used to track criminals. Today this same capability, in a number of breeds, is used to find people trapped following earthquakes or terrorist bombings; drugs, explosives or people being smuggled, and the evidence of arson following fires.



In **'Prepared'**, the monthly Birmingham ARP publication of June 1939 Councillor Norman Tiptaft, Chairman Birmingham ARP Committee, said:

'There is to-day a recognition of the fact that A.R.P. is as permanent and as vitally necessary as any other Corporation Department. Until war is abolished from the universe, A.R.P. will constitute one of the most essential defences against any invader. In Whitehall also, there has been a decided change of heart.'

Sadly war has not yet been abolished and he was not right about Whitehall.

### Green Goddesses - The Final Blow

*The Times* of 14<sup>th</sup> February 2005 contained a report that the first batch of 40 of the remaining 1,000 Green Goddesses in store are to be sold. Though their pumps are still in excellent working order the reason given was that they are now considered too slow and do not carry the specialised equipment needed for fighting fires today. It continued by saying that alternative arrangements had been made to cover for emergencies. These 40 were snapped up very quickly.

There were already some of these fine machines in the hands of enthusiasts but it seems unlikely that homes can be found for all 1,000.



Resplendent with new paint, a 'go faster' stripe and siren these machines were photographed in July 2001.

In June 1996, over 100 were shipped out in this condition to Azerbaijan and to Central Africa as part of aid programmes.

Associated Newspa-

started on 13<sup>th</sup> June and 8<sup>th</sup> September 1944 respectively and these feared missiles presented new problems for the Civil Defence Services as, although the V weapons presented no great fire risk, they were arriving on the UK by day and night and did considerable physical damage when their one ton high explosive warheads hit civilian communities. Again the mostly volunteer CD Services, men and women who also did a full time job during the day, turned out on duty protecting and serving their local communities. In addition to these services there was an amazing total of over 5 million British citizens who trained and served for a compulsory 48 hours every month as 'Fire Guards', patrolling their neighbourhood or their work places or blocks of flats to report and deal with incendiary bombs. The London Regional Commissioner stated that 'the Fireguard did excellent work ... some 75% of all fires caused by enemy action have been extinguished by them before the Fire Brigade arrived at the incident'.

The end of the war was in sight as the capture by advancing Allied armies in France and the Netherlands of the V1 and V2 launching sites brought to an end the bombardment of this country by 29<sup>th</sup> March 1945. The war against Germany went on until May 1945 and against Japan until August 1945, meanwhile Britain had started to deal with the effects of the war on their home front – which had meant death, injury to civilians and destruction or damage to their homes.



Rescue workers at the scene of a flying bomb damaged building in Old Jewry in the City of London 1944.

Associated Newspapers

The archive caption reports that this picture of a 2 year old child saying prayers was taken in a deep air-raid shelter, presumably the Underground, during the V-bomb attacks on Southern England in 1944. This I do not doubt. However, it also says that the child's name was Tony Champion. I wonder, but I suspect that we will never know.



Associated Newspapers



D Harper

### Near Misses

During the period of the V1 attacks on London I was a messenger in Ealing in the North West of London.

There were many incidents that I was associated with but I particularly remember two near misses that involved me and my family.

My mother, one Saturday, was travelling home on a bus and had intended to get off at Abernathy's, a big department store, to buy me an item of clothing that I needed. At the last moment, for some unknown reason, she decided to go straight home and make the purchase on another day. At about noon I heard a loud explosion, put my overalls on, and went to see if I could assist. The bomb had fallen on Abernathy's causing a great deal of damage. My mother would probably have been in the store at the time.

On another occasion, as part of my work, I had been visiting a block of flats in Camberwell to inspect the repairs. Having completed my work I went to get the No 78 tram in Denmark Hill. However, I was dirty so decided to miss the first tram and have a wash in the nearby public toilets. Having done so, I caught the next tram and, as usual, took a seat on the upper deck. Part way through my journey, near to the Walworth Road market, we stopped. I asked the conductor what was happening. He pointed to the tram ahead. I could see that it was the tram that I would have been on – the top had been blown off!

David Harper

Accordingly peace-time plans provided for information within the organisation of problems that might have to be faced and to ensure that resources could be used to best advantage. Selected authorities were allocated limited funds for emergency feeding plans and designated Councils were asked to continue planning for the care of the homeless. There were many imponderables but limited contingency planning proceeded in consultation with Government Departments, but without expenditure on actual physical preparations.

To assist with their remaining statutory civil defence responsibilities, local authorities were authorised to continue to appoint officers with specific duties for civil defence planning. The function of the civil defence officer was to co-ordinate the plans prepared by the responsible executive officers of the authority and to plan the necessary measures for raising the level of preparations in an emergency. Their duties were extended to embrace planning for peace-time emergencies and many were also designated as Emergency Planning Officers.

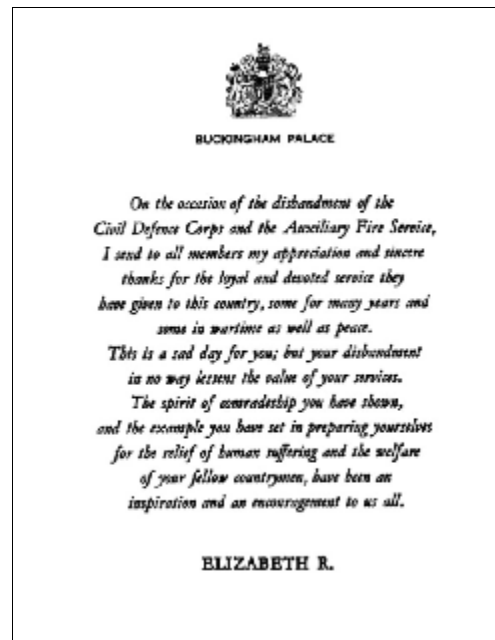
Sir Winston Churchill once said of civil defence in peace-time, that the need for it is beyond dispute. Times and the threat may have changed but 'what's to come is still unsure' and the need for contingency planning still persists as ever.



Looking rather sorry for themselves, these Green Goddesses were photographed in 1977 at Weeton Army Camp near Blackpool. Associated Newspapers

The Home Office also had large stocks of emergency cooking equipment such as Soyer Boilers, Field Cookers, insulated containers etc. They have now been sold.

Government's decision did not imply the total abandonment of civil defence. The decision to disband the Civil Defence Corps and the Auxiliary Fire Service had been taken with reluctance and regret and he paid tribute to the devotion and enthusiasm of the volunteers. The Government had decided that there was no justification for maintaining an organisation for the purpose of dealing with peace-time disasters. A message of appreciation and thanks from Her Majesty the Queen for loyal and devoted service was sent to each member and tribute was made by the Government and the House of Commons.



A House

### Effects on Industry

As it was also no longer appropriate for civil defence preparations in industry and commerce to continue on the scale previously applicable recruitment and training of volunteers for the Industrial Civil Defence Service ceased. It was, however, recommended that firms should take steps to maintain knowledge of civil defence among managements and staff and plans to minimise casualties and other effects of nuclear attack on production or services kept up-to-date and physical assets of a specialist nature acquired for civil defence preserved.

### Filling the Gap

Although economies had dictated that civil defence preparations were to be so drastically reduced no guarantee could, of course, be given that the risk of nuclear war could be excluded totally. Planning continued but on a greatly diminished scale so that in a period of tension civil defence measures could, if considered necessary, be raised. The Minister of State, Home Office, explained that local authority plans would need to provide for the setting up, at the appropriate time, an emergency committee of the authority and for arranging machinery for executive action in circumstances in which local authority procedures would not be practicable. The Civil Defence Corps, he said, had formed but a small part of the resources of skilled staff to be found in the various local authority departments and a great fund of experience existed there to discharge civil defence responsibilities.

### A QRCD'S TALE

In 1941, whilst serving in the Royal Navy I was unexpectedly instructed to report to the Commanding Officer at Chatham. For a mere rating to be summoned out of the blue to appear before the Captain was certainly unusual and to me seemed ominous. I wondered what serious transgression I could have committed. On my arrival (in no little trepidation) he confronted me with a document just received from the Admiralty. To my amazement (and, I believe, his) it was a signal stating that the Lords Commissioner had ordered my immediate release from the Service and secondment to Civil Defence in London.



Frank Raine-Allen in  
CD uniform (Assistant Controller)

F Raine-Allen

For three years prior to my enlistment I had been the Deputy Civil Defence Officer for the London Borough of Wembley and now, without any warning, I had been directed to return. At the time London was under heavy enemy air attack and one of my responsibilities, as a Qualified Bomb Reconnaissance Officer (known as a QRCD), was to investigate reports of unexploded missiles. One night on duty at the Central Civil Defence Control, a message was received that an unexploded bomb in Kingsbury, North West London, had caused the evacuation of many residents in the nearby housing estate. I was despatched to investigate.

Enemy bombers were still droning overhead as I drove along deserted roads on that cold, wintry and noisy night, eerily lit up by flashes of anti-aircraft gunfire. On my arrival I was directed by the local Wardens to a large nearby house, where, I was informed, a large unexploded bomb had fallen in the rear of its long garden.

In the black-out and the raid still in progress, I made my way by torchlight, cautiously and alone, down the long garden path. After a thorough and extensive search, I found the reported 'unexploded bomb' lying half hidden in the undergrowth. To my relief (and certainly to the relief of the evacuated residents) it was an over-size marrow!

Frank Raine-Allen





Holly Cartwright

Cartwright Family

### Holly Cartwright - The Longest Serving Civil Defender?

Holly Cartwright was enrolled into the ARP in Birmingham in 1938 by Councillor Norman Tiptaft, who was Chairman of the ARP Committee, and carried out many functions the first of which was to supervise the assembly of thousands of gas masks.

In 1944, Holly was sent to London, on many occasions, to assist with the evacuation in connection with the V Bomb attacks. On one trip he had assembled his charges but there was no transport to the station. He commandeered an empty bus - the driver and passengers having taken to a shelter - and drove it with his charges to the station. There he asked a policeman what he should do with the bus and was told to leave it where it was as it would probably be buried under rubble by morning!

He rejoined Civil Defence in 1948 as an Instructor until the 1968 Stand-down. He eventually retired in October 1977 being the longest serving Civil Defender in Birmingham and possibly in the UK.

He died in May 1998 leaving his family with an enormous archive of material some of which has been used in this book. This archive includes a '78' which is the only known copy of the only known, and private, recording of The March of the Civil Defence Services appropriately subtitled 'Come if ye Dare'. The CDA plans to make it available as a free download from its web-site and provide a copy to the National Sound Archive held by the British Library.

and West would be preceded by a deterioration in the political situation over a period of weeks rather than days and might spread over a longer period.

The revised policy provided for the retention of the considerable assets built up over the years so that more active preparations could be resumed. Operational control buildings and their communications (which formed part of the emergency control system at the various levels of government) were preserved but on a care and maintenance basis. Some civil defence planning continued but, as officially decreed, '...at a level needed to enable more active preparations to be resumed, if necessary, without too much loss of ground'.

Home Office civil defence staff were withdrawn from the Regions but a central planning staff was retained. The Civil Defence Staff College at Sunningdale and the Training Schools at Falfield and Taymouth Castle were closed in 1968 but the School at Easingwold, Yorkshire (later to be designated the Home Defence College) was retained for centralised training and as a venue for civil defence studies and conferences. Background and general courses continued for those having planning responsibilities in local and central government, essential services and for the Police and the Fire Service. Training for the United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation (which, with the Royal Observer Corps, was then retained) also continued. The special responsibilities of the police in peace and war continued with planning and training to cope. Emergency planning by the regular peace-time Fire Service also continued with central training for selected officers of Brigades given at the Fire Services Training College at Moreton-in-Marsh. Stocks of emergency fire service equipment were retained in store.

The Ambulance Reserve (a non-uniformed organisation set up in 1967) was retained as 'a planning concept' so that in an emergency recruitment of war-time ambulance drivers could be quickly resumed. There was no actual manning of the Reserve and volunteers were released from their commitment.

### Reaction

The stand-down of the Civil Defence Corps and the Auxiliary Fire Service, coming so soon after the re-organisation of 1967, understandably came as a very great shock and disappointment to the thousands of men and women who had given such loyal and devoted service for so many years and to over 2000 staff employed on civil defence duties. Demonstrations of protest against disbandment took place in many parts of the country and a mass parade was held in London. Despite this and the presentation of a petition to the Prime Minister the Civil Defence Corps and the Auxiliary Fire Service were disbanded on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1968 and local authorities were relieved of their responsibilities for these Services.

An Opposition motion in the House of Commons called on the Government to make it possible for the civil defence services to continue on a voluntary basis. The Home Secretary (the Rt. Hon. James Callaghan) replied that the





F Raine-Allen

The unofficial Stand-down parade in Whitehall in March 1968.  
The protest had no effect on the Government decision.



F Raine-Allen

### 3. Fire Services in WWII - Alan House

The Fire Service was, and is, part of the country's Civil Defence organisation. However, for ease of understanding of its role and activities it is convenient to cover its work separately.

#### Fire Service Preparations

As the Government prepared for what appeared to be inevitable conflict and that such conflict would almost certainly involve bombing raids from the air, each Fire Authority was required to form an Auxiliary Fire Service, under the direction of the local Chief Fire Officer, but whose role was solely to prepare for the eventuality of war and for dealing with fires that would follow an air raid. Recruitment began in 1938.

On 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939 the Home Office sent out a telegram to all fire authorities requiring them to activate their plans and call out the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS). By this time there had been a re-organisation of fire cover and the number of brigades reduced from 1450 to a more manageable 578. 5,774 pumps and 1100 miles of hose had been ordered and were becoming available to be used with the variety of lorries, grocers vans, taxis etc. that had been identified. New fire stations were opened in garages, bus stations, schools and other suitable locations. Some communities had a local fire station for the first time.

#### Waiting for Action

After the hectic work of activation, as with the other civil defence services, there was a long period of anti-climax. The Fire Service experienced the same problems with morale, recruitment and retention mentioned in the previous chapter. All this despite being issued by June 1940 with 25,000 pumps, 3,000 miles of hose and vast quantities of associated equipment ready for the 77,000 full-time and 170,000 part-time personnel to use. Its public image was of firemen being military service dodgers and a wasted workforce. This was hard for them to bear.

#### Into Action

This soon changed as the bombing began. The public saw just how brave these people were and how hard their task was. Now they were public heroes. Winston Churchill later referred to them as 'heroes with grimy faces'. The Daily Express referred to the AFS badge as 'a badge of honour, like RAF wings or the cap badge of guardsmen'.

There is no doubt that the fire services did an excellent job during the blitz on London and elsewhere in the country. However, there had been difficulties largely arising from the fact that brigades had been organised locally and there had, pre-war, been no nationally set down standards for both training and, more

importantly, equipment. When a unit had been asked to back-up a neighbour there were too many occasions when, for example, hoses could not be attached to the local pump or to a hydrant and so were useless.

### **Formation of the National Fire Service**

To overcome these problems the Fire Service was again re-organised into the National Fire Service (NFS). This force came into existence on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1941 and all Brigade and AFS personnel were transferred into it. It was responsible, through regions, to the Home Office directly which meant that the chain of command was much simpler and standardisation of training and equipment could be quickly effected. This was probably the biggest single good thing to come out of the war for the fire service. The new structure meant that decisions to move fire engines and manpower in response to the location of heavy air raids could be made much more quickly and effectively. The benefits of standardisation in new fire engines, pump trailers etc. also became clear as these became more numerous as they were delivered from the factories. Unlike pre-war and today they were all painted a drab grey colour. It was said that this was to make them less able to be spotted from the air but a more likely reason was a shortage of red paint pigment! The other great improvement was the provision of proper cabs giving protection



11<sup>th</sup> May 1941, Fire at British Oil & Cake Mill at Hull - 2 died H Cartwright Archive

## **7. 1968 Stand-Down - Frank Raine-Allen**

Whilst attending a course in January 1968 at the Civil Defence Training School, Eastwood Park, Falfield, Gloucestershire (where I had qualified as an Instructor over 30 years before) I was unexpectedly asked to see the Commandant (Lt. Col. A.J. Batchelor) in his office. There, to my great surprise, he showed me an official communication he had received and asked if I had had any prior knowledge of its content. I had not been informed of the decision in advance, even though I had served as a Local Authority representative on Home Office Civil Defence working parties and at the time was the Civil Defence Adviser to the Greater London Council and Vice President and Chairman of the Association of Civil Defence Officers. Like the Commandant, I was shocked to hear that the Government had decided that drastic and far-reaching changes were to be made in civil defence and all training at the School would cease.

### **Changing Times**

I was well aware that, as part of a wider review of public expenditure, a searching review of Home Defence had taken place over the two preceding years and stringent measures of economy had already been imposed on expenditure in 1967. On the basis that there might only be a very short time in which to take final precautions before attack, local authorities were then required to review their plans for the discharge of their war-time responsibilities. With the severe restraint imposed on their own civil defence expenditure greater emphasis was given in planning to the marshalling and deployment of surviving resources after attack and, following life-saving operations, to measures over a longer period to provide for the restoration of the community. Local authorities were urged to make use of their own employees for keeping their administrative organisation working in war and for manning the civil defence control system. There were, however, some services for which there was no peace-time counterpart. To meet a more changed and flexible role the Civil Defence Corps was re-organised and by September 1967 its authorised active strength substantially reduced to about 80,000.

### **The Bombshell**

But within a few months all was changed. On the 16<sup>th</sup> January 1968 the Prime Minister (the Rt. Hon. Harold Wilson) announced in the House of Commons: 'We have decided to reduce Home Defence - Civil Defence - to a care and maintenance basis with a saving of about £14 million in 1968-69 and £20 million in subsequent years....'. This unexpected and major change of policy was said to be part of the Government's efforts to make devaluation work by means of a progressive and massive shift of resources from home consumption. It was also made against a background of a strategic assumption, accepted by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, that any future confrontation in the 'Cold War' between East



have meant that the radiation from nuclear fallout would have prevented fire crews from getting within 50 to 100 miles of the scene and safely operate. For conventional bombing attacks there is no doubt that the AFS would have been an effective source of reinforcements, who in particular were very able and proficient at providing water supplies over long distances.



Associated Newspapers

Associated Newspapers

Above Left: Training on a 'Bikini' at Morton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire, September 1960

Above Right: Green Goddess at Aberfan, October 1966 (see also previous chapter).

Below: Southampton AFS vehicles leaving in convoy to the Home Office stores.



A R House

to the crew travelling to the fire during an air raid from both shrapnel and flying debris.

### Reinforcements

A system of reinforcement to cities and towns under attack was based on formations of Section size (5 fire engines), Company (10 appliances) up to full Mobile Columns of 50 fire engines and associated equipment and men. Bases were at designated places where they could 'stand-by' or for crews to be rested and fed.

Communication was vital for the Fire Service. They could not rely on the telephone system and radios were rare. Like the ARP, messengers were taken on. They were supposed to be at least 16 years old but many lied about their age. A bicycle was a bonus and, when available, motor bikes really helped. Apart from carrying messages the messengers performed the most important role of guiding incoming reinforcements to the incident who had no local knowledge. As part of their training they learnt map reading, Morse code, semaphore and first aid.

Essential to fighting fires is water. A real worry was that the water mains would be damaged – as they often were. To avoid this problem reserve water tanks were set up everywhere, in parks, open ground and even in the basements of bombed buildings. Local ponds, lakes, watercourses, streams and rivers were



Some of the Canadian Firefighters sightseeing at the Tower of London shortly after their arrival in the UK in 1942. See page 26.

Associated Newspapers



identified as suitable sources. The AFS and the NFS came to have the capability to pump vast amounts of water over large distances.

Things were very different in those days. There were no women on fire engines as there are today. However, apart from the senior officer all control room staff were women. Many became despatch rider messengers or drove a variety of vehicles and worked the mobile canteens. Their involvement was as important to the fire services as it was in the factories and offices of wartime Britain.

In Autumn 1942 400 members of the Corps of Canadian Firefighters arrived to assist the NFS and were posted to Portsmouth, Southampton, Plymouth and Bristol. Three were killed as a result of enemy action. They finally returned home in November 1944 after seeing action in several air raids.

### On the Water

Working alongside the land based fire engines were the Fireboats. Many of them were based in London fighting fires in the docks and warehouses alongside the River Thames. They were also valuable for pumping water ashore in support of supplies from the mains and refilling water tanks. Many other river and dock



Imperial War Museum, London; Ref: D17215

One of a series of photographs in the archive of this crew. Others show them making paddles for use by the commandos. Doing war work during slack periods between training and action was common throughout the Civil Defence Services.

This MDC was planned to consist of 48 Battalions – 36 in support of the Civil Defence Corps and 12 the AFS.

The need to use National Servicemen, military reservists (and later members of the Territorial Army) in this manner was mainly due to continuing poor recruitment and retention in the AFS. One estimate made by the Chief Inspector of Fire Services, Mr H M Smith, in August 1955 was that there was a need to train 10,000 military reservists annually in order to maintain the levels of personnel that would be required to crew mobile Columns on a scale to meet the predicted scenes of devastation and the number of fires to be fought post nuclear attack.



November 1964, Exercise 'Solfire III'. Z Craft 'Zara' from the military port, A R House Marchwood, with 4 Green Goddesses on board, to deal with fires on ships off the Hampshire coastline. The Solfire plan is still in being today.

### The Second Stand-down

On 16<sup>th</sup> January 1968, the Prime Minister announced in a statement to the House of Commons that Civil Defence was to be placed on a 'care and maintenance' basis. Recruitment would cease immediately and the Auxiliary Fire Service, along with other Civil Defence services, would be formally disbanded on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1968. From all over the UK, a stockpile of AFS vehicles, equipment and uniform was taken to various Home Office supply stores.

Despite there being the appliances and equipment in place to meet the predicted effects of the results of a nuclear attack and despite well rehearsed plans, the recruitment levels of men and women in the AFS never reached national targets. Lack of action and associated boredom was probably one of the biggest factors leading to resignations and lack of interest. The reality of trying to deal with the devastation and fires resulting from a nuclear attack would probably

The overall make-up of a Column was designed to make it possible for it to be self sufficient in terms of fuel, feeding, accommodation and equipment/vehicle repairs. In time of war enhanced equipment such as inflatable structures would also have been issued. When mobilised in conjunction with a Civil Defence Corps Column the capabilities were vast.

Training movements in peacetime did of course have to take account of everyday life and other traffic, albeit there were far fewer vehicles on the road in those days. In time of war there would have been many emergency measures initiated and the movement of large Columns of vehicles to areas under attack would have taken a different level of priority. It can be seen, however, that the selection of routes would be more critical and difficult due to people fleeing the area and likely bomb damage to areas surrounding the main target location. The weapons of this new era of warfare would also present a new routing problem, that of radioactive or chemical fallout that would restrict access or mean that certain routes could not be used.

At the peak of its organisation the Home Office had at its disposal sufficient appliances and equipment to equip fully 40 mobile fire Columns.

### Military Support

As well as these Fire Columns and the Civil Defence Corps Columns there were also columns from the Police and the military known as the Mobile Defence Corps (MDC).



A R House

Leading Firewoman U R Rixon receiving her Civil Defence Long Service Medal (15 years service) from Hampshire Chief Fire Officer, Mr E R Ashill.

areas also had fireboats. In April and May 1944, 44 NFS fireboats, some seagoing, were gathered along the South coast to provide protection for the D-Day invasion fleet.

### Service Abroad

In March 1944 volunteers from the NFS were invited to join a Contingent to be formed to be part of the invasion of France on D Day. Those who volunteered went before selection boards and had to undergo strict tests and medical examinations. If they were accepted they underwent specialised firefighting training and fitness work-outs including assault courses and long route marches. They practised getting pumps on and off landing craft – sometimes ‘under fire’. They were not to be the subject of military control but they were told that they were entitled to be treated as prisoners of war which must have been comforting.

Five columns were formed and were ready for operation by D-Day – ready to cross the channel to assist the armed forces by putting out fires as the troops advanced. Cherbourg, a major port in Northern France, in particular burned out of control for several days. On 17<sup>th</sup> October 1944, four columns and most of the fireboat flotilla were stood down without having been used which, for them, was extremely disappointing.

Finally, on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1945, on the coldest night for 80 years, No 4 Column was sent into action, sailing from Tilbury for Ostend. They were sent, not to assist the British forces who were being protected by the Army Fire Service, but to work with the American Army. The column headquarters and one other company



NFS Volunteer Overseas Contingent members with their newly issued kit.

Associated Newspapers

went to Namur, two companies to Liege, one to Verdun and one to Etain. Within a few hours of arriving at Verdun, the company was in action fighting a severe roof fire in a hotel being used to accommodate American troops. In the main, the NFS units were with the Twelfth (US) Army Group and Quarter Master Corps, but some were attached to the US Ordnance Corps. Ration, fuel and ammunition dumps were the main risks protected by the companies. The dumps varied from small railheads to areas of 25 square miles with petrol storage amounting to millions of gallons. Most of these dumps had little or no water supplies and so the construction and filling of emergency water supply tanks became a high priority for NFS personnel. Fires were frequent and because of the materials involved they were often very dangerous.

It was not long before the whole of No 4 Column was spread over Holland, France, Belgium and Luxembourg. On 17<sup>th</sup> March the first NFS crews crossed over the Rhine into Germany, being the only unarmed allied personnel operating in the heart of the country with the enemy army in full retreat. Snipers, mines and booby-traps were a constant threat and indeed caused several casualties. In mid April, the mobile phase of fire protection operations ceased and personnel relieved the Army Fire Service with the British 21st Army Group. Units were tasked with providing fire protection at base ports and dumps in North Belgium.



This cartoon by Audrey Bodger appeared in the NALGO (now UNISON) Newsletter. It records an incident told by Frank Buckley, Bomb Reconnaissance Officer, at Bristol in WWII. Searching for a reported unexploded bomb, the cartoon shows Frank who found two workmen brewing up tea round the exposed fin of a German 250 kg UXB. The bomb was confirmed and removed by the RE Bomb Disposal Squad to the 'bomb cemetery' at a quarry in the grounds of Ashton Court Mansion, near Bristol.

Following a period of trials and development, the AFS Mobile Column was fully established in concept and AFS personnel began training in their formation and mobilisation. Various types and numbers of vehicles were issued to brigades around the UK. Each brigade was part of a Region and each Region was structured to be able to establish, on mobilisation, a number of Mobile Columns. The vehicle types would be mobilised to rendezvous points where Columns would be formed prior to operational deployment.

A mobile fire column consisted of 6 Companies of which one (yellow) was the Headquarters Company and 5 (red, white, blue, green and black) were Fire-fighting Companies. In total the Mobile Column would consist of 144 vehicles of all types and 675 personnel.

In order to ensure a controlled and supervised movement of a Mobile Fire Column, it was necessary for vehicles to be divided into small groups that would be formed only for the period of actual road movement to a given destination. On arrival, vehicles and personnel would revert to Company formation. A total of 17 groups would be formed for a full size Column.

The main body of a full Column, when correctly spaced, would extend over 8 miles with the Reconnaissance Platoon a further 15 miles ahead. Motorcyclists were then utilised along the length of the Column, controlling junctions, giving directions, relaying messages and generally acting as 'shepherds'.



Mobile Fire Column formed up at the Fire Service Training Centre, Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire.

A R House



on the 'Reserve' would have completed 50 hours basic training, would retain their uniform and would then be required to attend further training sessions as frequently as possible but not less than one session per year. Those unable to fulfil this annual requirement would be discharged. Also introduced were new proficiency tests to follow a revised syllabus of training and the creation of a 'bounty' payment for fully trained members after the completion of 3 years. The 'bounty' was a £10 payment per annum in arrears! There were also new minimum obligations for those who were on the AFS Reserve.

### Mobile Columns

The experience of firefighting operations during World War II and the need to move reinforcement convoys (columns) to cities under attack was to be the foundation of the new organisation.

In May 1952 senior fire officers began attending the Fire Service College, Dorking, to be introduced to the planned Columns and the logistics involved.

In January 1953 a Civil Defence 'Mobile Column Depot' was opened by the Home Secretary at Epsom, Surrey. It was here that 150 military personnel were seconded to work up and develop the formation of both the Civil Defence and AFS Mobile Columns.



M Bidder



I was a member of this Mobile Column at Epsom and exchanged my military uniforms for a Civil Defence one. The column toured the UK during 1954 from Aberdeen to Chickerell in Cornwall.

Malcolm Bidder

*Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, the Home Secretary who opened the depot, is reported as asking that they remember the old slogan; 'If you don't need what you have learnt in Civil Defence, you have lost nothing, but if you haven't learnt anything in Civil Defence, you may lose everything'.*

The Column finally boarded ships to come home on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1945. During their time in this theatre of war, personnel attended over 500 recorded large incidents, 120 pipe leaks and other special services.

### The End of Wartime Service

The formal and unconditioned surrender of Germany closed the wartime chapter for the fire service. Victory in Europe was celebrated on VE Day 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945. During the many national and local parades, the men and women rightfully took their place to receive the applause and thanks of a war weary nation. Never before had the skills and courage of Britain's fire service been put to such a prolonged and difficult test. They had not only survived the physical acts of war, but also the trauma of ridicule and abuse by the unknowing in the early days of the 'phoney war'. They were now able to be counted amongst the nation's and indeed, the world's, heroes - heroes with grimy faces.

### Fire Guards & Fire Watchers

Mention has been made in the previous chapter of Fire Guards which, from 1942 included women, who were trained to look for falling incendiary bombs and, if possible, deal with them. They were supplemented by Fire Watchers especially in business and government offices and factories. They were based where they worked so had a great deal of vital local knowledge. They were required to stay at their posts, usually on roofs during raids with, basically, only a tin hat for protection. Nearly 1,750 were killed as a result of enemy action.

### The Return of Peace

On 18<sup>th</sup> August 1945, exactly 4 years after the official formation of the NFS, the last part time personnel were stood down. This was the final date that the fire service would operate under wartime organisation. The NFS as an organisation did, however, continue in existence until 1<sup>st</sup> August 1948 when control of the fire service was handed back to local authorities.



VE Day - probably the most famous Buckingham Palace balcony image of all. L to R, Princess Elizabeth, Queen Elizabeth, Winston Churchill, King George VI & Princess Margaret Associated Newspapers



Margaret Beal

### Me, the Fire Service & D-day

Sixty years ago I was an Assistant to the Area Officer in the 25 Region Fire Force H.Q., Stone, Staffordshire. A 'Colour Scheme' arranged postings of Firemen and Fire Women to the South Coastal area and South West area to reinforce personnel of other Fire Force Areas in preparation for D-Day later in the year. People from Lancashire, East and West Midlands were transported to various points without knowing their destination. I was fortunate to be told in advance that I was to be going to No. 30 Fire Force Area Brighton. Soon after my arrival I was posted to the Staff of the Area Officer at the Headquarters in Dyke Road, Brighton. In the main my duties involved the welfare of Fire Women. They came from Wigan, Oldham, Blackburn, Liverpool and Manchester etc., and many had never been away from home before.

Leisure time was spent either at the cinema or dancing. Some of the girls in my care threw caution to the winds and really enjoyed the attentions of the servicemen.

Although we were never officially informed about the preparations for D-Day it became more and more apparent that something was about to happen. Staff Officers were required to visit billets checking water buckets, fire extinguishers and black outs. On a rare outing from Brighton I saw that the harbours at Newhaven and Shoreham were filled with tank landing craft. Brighton roads and streets were filled with tanks, armoured cars etc., and in the surrounding Sussex countryside there was a build up of troops from all parts of the globe - not only the British Army and Air Force but also Americans, Canadians, New Zealanders and Free French. Passes were required to go everywhere and it seemed that *everything* was 'Top Secret'.

Margaret Beal



Jack Stanier



John Stanier

### 'Jack the Gas' - George Medal

My Uncle Jack Stanier was Deputy Gas Engineer with the Stoke-on-Trent Gas Department when, in January 1941, incendiary bombs were dropped on their gasometers punching holes into them and setting fire to the escaping gas. He led a team of employees and firemen who climbed onto the top of the gasometers and extinguished the fires with lumps of clay! He was awarded the George Medal and his Engineering Assistant, J S Warrilow, was awarded a BEM for gallantry and resource.

Me? I was a real life 'Private Pike' and my father the 'Captain Mainwaring' of 2078 MU Motor Transport Company, Home Guard, in Derby.

John Stanier

Civil Defence training was also a requirement for all local authority brigade members and included: Civil Defence organisation, high explosive missiles and bombs, atomic warfare, chemical warfare, biological warfare and protective measures.

### Arrival of the Green Godesses

In the beginning, the vehicles issued were those that remained in government storage from WWII and were still painted grey. Progressively, from 1953 onwards, purpose built vehicles were issued specifically designed for the AFS, all painted dark green. The pumping appliances became to be known as 'Green Goddesses', many of which, at the time of writing, still exist in Government storage. They have become familiar to the public in recent years as they have been seen on the streets of the UK, manned by the military, during industrial unrest - but that is a different story!



Green Goddess NYR4, a Bedford SHZ, Issued May 1954 and based at Southampton Central Station.

A R House

In July 1962, the Government announced plans for the re-organisation of the AFS (along with all other Civil Defence services). The plans included a 'weeding out' of the now many ineffective and non participating members, the setting of a new reduced recruitment age of 17 and an upper age limit of 55 years. There were to be 2 categories of personnel: 'Fully Operational' on a 3 year engagement, and 'Fully Trained' as far as basic tests and on the reserve from then on. Those placed

## 6. Auxiliary Fire Service 1949-1968 - Alan House

Alongside the formation of the Civil Defence Corps, the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) was re-activated in 1949, with the task of preparing for war and attack from the air, just as it had been in 1938. The thinking was just the same, in that a large number, of (unpaid) volunteers would be recruited and trained ready to supplement the peace-time Fire Service personnel. It was specifically laid down that these volunteers would only train and exercise. They would not be used alongside the regular and retained firefighters unless the country was at war. The politics behind this, were perhaps understandable, but it did make recruitment and retention difficult and did lead to a lack of integration.

### Recruitment

Recruitment began immediately and Fire Authorities were expected to arrange for the creation of recruiting centres and other arrangements for enrolment. The organisation was to be based on existing fire stations and no new construction could be approved at that time. The training syllabus involved a 60 hour course. The minimum age was 30 years but no upper age limit had been set. The aim was to enrol 2 male auxiliary firemen for every whole time fireman and one auxiliary fireman for every part-time fireman. Later experience did in fact indicate that it would probably be necessary for some AFS members to become whole time members.

Recruitment was a task that, from the beginning, was reported by all Chief Fire Officers as being difficult and various campaigns or publicity events only managed to produce limited results, with efforts to increase numbers in any given year often being balanced those who left the organisation.



Examples of AFS Recruitment Posters

A R House

## Civil Defence George Cross Recipients



<b>ALDERSON</b> Thomas Hooper (1st GC awarded)	Detachment Leader, ARP	Blitz rescue	Bridlington
<b>DAVIES</b> Frederick	National Fire Service	Fire rescue	London
<b>ERRINGTON</b> Harry	Fireman Auxiliary Fire Service	Rescued people from fire	London
<b>FOX</b> Leslie Owen	Deputy Party Leader LCC Heavy Rescue Service	Bombsite rescue	Fulham, London
<b>HARRIS</b> Roy Thomas	ARP Engineers Service	Bomb disposal	Croyden, Surrey
<b>HEMING</b> Edward Albert	Section Leader, Civil Defence Rescue Service	Bombed church rescue	London
<b>MILES</b> Leonard John/James	ARP Warden	Warning of explosion	Essex
<b>HOWARD</b> Charles Henry George, Earl of Suffolk & Berkshire	Research Officer, Ministry of Supply	Bomb disposal	Erith Marshes, Kent
<b>MOSEDALE</b> William Radenhurst	Station Officer, Birmingham Fire Brigade	Bomb damage rescue	Birmingham
<b>SMITH</b> Anthony	Chimney Sweep, Civil Defence	Bomb damage rescue	Chelsea

The last survivor of these George Cross winners, Harry Errington, died in December 2004.

Many other Civil Defenders received either the George Medal or posthumous commendations



#### 4. 1945 Stand-Down - Robin Woolven

The British civil defences, having been comparatively late in being started in 1935, were rapidly reduced then closed down well before the war ended. The Fire Guard regulations had been relaxed on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1944 and part-time members of the National Fire Service were stood down on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1945. Orders were issued on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1945 that the civil defence organisation across the UK should be wound down and, soon, the 'appointed day' of 2<sup>nd</sup> May for the close-down of the whole organisation was announced.

##### Stand-Down Parades

The war in Europe was officially declared at an end on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945 and, on 10<sup>th</sup> June, the final act for civil defenders was a farewell parade in Hyde Park, reviewed and addressed by HM King George. The war against Japan ended on 14<sup>th</sup> August, by which time the British civil defence organisation was being dismantled. Members of civil defence received a letter of thanks for their splendid and successful efforts from the Home Secretary and those members that met the service criteria, were awarded a medal to mark their service for their country. But

Hulton Archive / Getty Images



the rapid pace at which the CD Services had been dispensed with caused much comment, even resentment, from people, some of whom had been serving the ARP/CD Services as volunteers for six years. When, in 1953, the head of the Home Office Civil Defence Department read the final draft of Major Terence O'Brien's Official History *Civil Defence* he commented that he was 'constantly coming across the complaint that at the end of the war the CD Services were dismissed with scant ceremony [but] the facts are extremely [sic] different'.

**10<sup>th</sup> June 1945, Hyde Park, London.** King George VI and Queen Elizabeth took the salute at the Stand-Down parade of the Civil Defence Services, including the ladies of the NFS, (right) and The Queen met some of the volunteers (left).



Alfred Cope

In convoy (above) on the M1 in the early 1960's, en route to an exercise at Bully Fen, Hackney, London (right)



##### The Civil Defence Corps in Derby

After National Service with REME, I joined the CD Corps in 1958. It had its headquarters in the former Derby High School on Osmaston Road to the South of the centre of the city. All the sections were based there using the classrooms and a Rescue Section training area at the back which was well supplied with old bricks and rubble, probably as a result of war-time bombing – near misses from the railway works nearby.

This rubble was also used as the raw material for training of the Welfare Section in the construction of improvised cookers and ovens. The food that they produced was really good and enjoyed by everyone.

A training highlight was always the weekend away from base, seeing new places and meeting Corps members from other Divisions. The opportunity to show off our skills was not to be missed.

One such exercise in winter in the early 1960's was held at Bully Fen, Hackney, London and we travelled in convoy down the newly opened M1. As can be seen from the picture we had the road to ourselves. As ever the exercise was great fun as they always were.

Alfred Cope



Worcester Division Rescue team in training.  
Note that they each have a 'Man Pack'

H Cartwright Archive



Some of the Hampshire vehicles that went back to the Home Office stores  
and then to be sold.

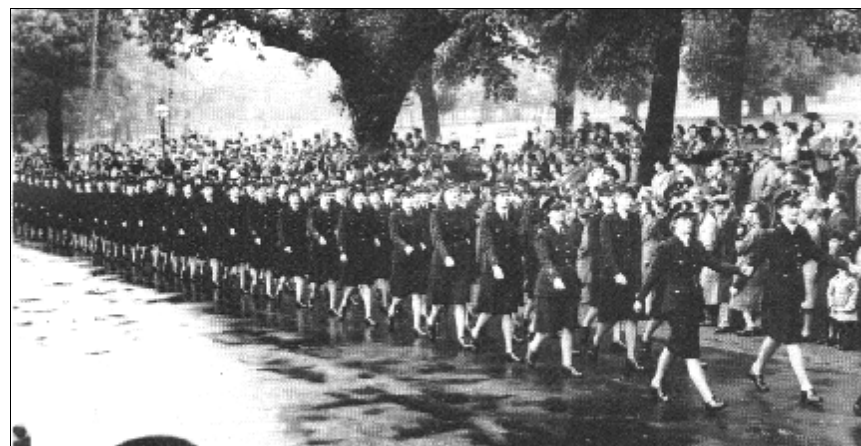
A R House

The enormity of the problems that faced the British government and people in 1945 should be remembered. They made it inevitable that the country had to tackle the destruction and shortages of food, raw materials, fuel, money and manpower. The armed forces had to be brought home and de-mobilised. Industry had to turn from weapons manufacture to concentrate on reconstruction. So the earliest opportunity had to be taken to disband the civil defenders now that the enemy threat had vanished. But, as will be seen later, the introduction of the atomic bomb brought in new potential enemies and threats to national security.

### In Summary

So this country and its civilian population survived the German attack but it only did so at considerable cost. Over 64,000 tons of high explosive bombs had been dropped on Britain as well as 5,823 V1 flying bombs and 1,054 V2 long range rockets. In all some 60,595 British civilians had been killed by enemy action during the war and 86,182 others were seriously injured. Of these 146,777 civilians killed, missing believed killed, or seriously injured 67,661 were men, 63,221 were women and 15,358 were children under 16 - a further 537 bodies were unidentified. Civil Defence workers on duty suffered 6,838 casualties (2,379 killed and 4,458 seriously injured) of which 6,220 were men and 618 were women. With so many houses destroyed and damaged there developed a massive housing shortage at a time when few building workers were available for house repairs. Special teams of craftsmen were released from the armed forces to join workers from this country and from Ireland together with Italian Prisoner of War 'co-operators' in the massive workforce specially assembled to tackle house repairs.

To illustrate the extent to which so many ordinary citizens of all ages were involved in civil defence, it should be remembered that the strength of the ARP, Police and Fire Services peaked at 1,869,100 in December 1943. Of these men

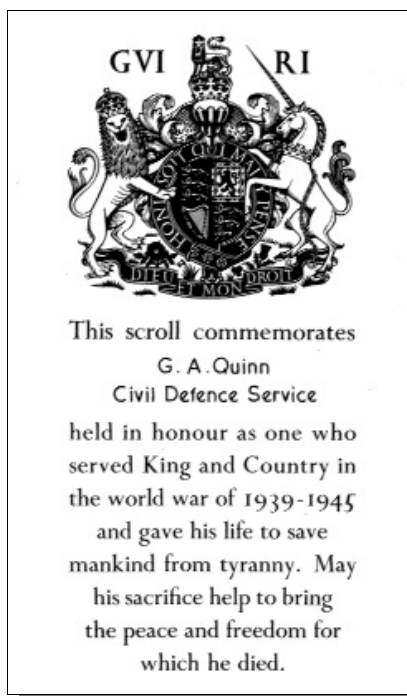


Associated Newspapers



and women, some 1,576,900 (84.4%) were part-time members and most had other work and home responsibilities. This was from a national population estimated in 1939 at around 40,000,000. And then there were those 5 million other people who were required to perform their Fire Guard (fire prevention) duties so Civil Defence in the Second World War was a necessary, very worthwhile and truly national effort.

Illustrated (above right) is a memorial scroll recording the death of George Alfred Quinn, an Air Raid Warden in Bermondsey, London, who had been killed on 18<sup>th</sup> September 1940. It was supplied by his son Alan. The original is with his sister who now lives in Australia. His name, with nearly 7,000 others, is recorded in the Civil Defence Book of Remembrance lodged in The Chapel at The National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire.



1945 Stand-down parade of the Middlesex CD Services at Wembley Stadium. The salute was taken by King Olav of Norway.

F Raine-Allen



3<sup>rd</sup> September 1953: Emergency feeding exercise in Dudley, West Midlands serving the Mayor & Mayoress, Alderman & Mrs Silcox. Note the use of an improvised hotplate.

H Cartwright Archive

equipped buildings still stand and are to be manned in an emergency - who by? The doubts about the viability of Home Defence without trained personnel stand out. The defence of the people in wartime demanded that there should be no misunderstanding, but the Government would not submit its scheme to an impartial study. Without doubt a noble service had been sacrificed on the altar of financial expediency. A spontaneous movement, spearheaded by a march of some 2,000 volunteers down Whitehall failed to move the Government but the Government edict could not destroy the knowledge of the success and efficacy of a job well done over two decades.

An Editorial in the Journal of the Association of Civil Defence Officers said: *'The need for a virile and effective Corps is as vital today as ever it was, and no viable Civil Defence Organization in this country is possible without the active participation of a trained volunteer force able and ready to supplement the efforts of government.'*



on which the various Civil Defence and other services everywhere were being organized, not only to do their own jobs but also to cooperate with each other, were the right ones. The Lord Mayor of London in his report on the 1953 East Coast Floods stated 'The emergency proved the value of having thousands of trained workers capable of dealing with the many human and physical problems that have to be solved in a disaster of any kind. Britain has never lacked the volunteer workers in any emergency that may arise and splendid work is carried out by all, but...

**organisation & training more than doubled their effectiveness.**

The exacting work carried out by Civil Defence in that great disaster tested methods of control, rescue and welfare to the utmost, and has shown they are sound'.

**The Parting of the Way**

At the Annual Conference of the Association of Civil Defence Officers in June 1967 Lord Stonham, Minister of State for Civil Defence at the Home Office, stated 'The role of the volunteer is a vitally important element. The problems call for leadership of the highest order. We still need volunteers of a high calibre with qualities of leadership. The country owes a debt to the volunteers who give selflessly of their time to the public service. The government fully recognizes the great importance and value of the work, which is being done by the true servants of this country.' Again Lord Stonham in November 1967 addressing an Elected Members Study at the Home Office School, Falfield, 'I cannot over emphasize the fact that a substantial reserve of trained people is a cornerstone of the new arrangements... (He was referring to a recent comprehensive review of Home Defence planning and reorganization of the Civil Defence Corps)... and it is imperative that Corps authorities should try to maintain an effective and enthusiastic local division, containing people of high calibre and ability to lead'.

In January 1968 the bombshell. The Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, told the House of Commons, inter alia, that Civil Defence was to be put on a 'care and maintenance' basis, and the Civil Defence Corps was to be disbanded on 31<sup>st</sup> March. A Debate in the House of Commons on 28<sup>th</sup> February produced two statements intended to ameliorate this abandonment of protection to the people. The first was that the risk of nuclear attack on the country had diminished considerably and the second a denial that the Government was abandoning Civil Defence. The first statement was an arguable one, statesmen and politicians have not demonstrated in the past a particularly successful assessment of the all-important question of world peace. They have a very poor record indeed as the pages of Hansard of the third decade of this century show. The second statement that Civil Defence was not being abandoned was highly questionable. David Ennals, the Minister at the Home Office, argued that if money was being spent the cause is not being abandoned. But that was a play on words. But did an effective Civil Defence Organization remain? That was the kernel of the argument. If the fully

## 5. Civil Defence Corps 1949 - 1968 - Eric Alley

*'The call of duty, the spirit of comradeship, the sense of high purpose is as necessary in the future as when the citizen armies of Civil Defence were gathered together.'*

H.M. King George VI 10<sup>th</sup> June 1945

Those words of HM King George VI at the stand down parade of the Civil Defence Services in Hyde Park in June 1945 must have been written with some foreknowledge of events to come. In addition, the fact that the Home Office encouraged local authorities to keep together the veterans of the Civil Defence Services by funding the maintenance of local Civil Defence Associations must have rung a few alarm bells (Civil Defence Circular 100/1945). Sure enough, the euphoria of the victory year was short-lived. In 1946 Churchill spoke of 'the iron curtain descending across Europe' The next year the term 'Cold War' entered the vocabulary and two years later the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb.

**Recall**

Civil Defence suddenly became a necessity once again, and, spearheaded by the Civil Defence Act 1948, many new measures sprang into being. Not the least of which was the issue of a Warrant to establish the Civil Defence Corps to provide the basic organization and staff for many of the new functions imposed on Local Authorities in 1949 by the Civil Defence (Public Protection) Regulations. The local authorities became known as 'Corps Authorities' to organize, recruit and train the volunteers whose task it was to assist the local authorities to carry out their civil defence functions which were:

The collection of intelligence on the results of hostile attack

Control and coordination of action as a result of the attack

Rescue

Protection against the effects of nuclear, biological or chemical attack.

Instruction and advice to the public.

To carry out these duties the local authorities would have the assistance of five sections of the Civil Defence Corps; Headquarters, Warden, Rescue, Welfare and Ambulance and First Aid.

It was a momentous decision to establish this permanent peacetime Civil Defence Organisation, and it was a tremendous task - the working out of the subdivisions, and the establishment of the first experimental courses at the Sunningdale Staff College in 1950 preceded by the Technical Training Schools at Falfield and Easingwold in 1949 followed by the Scottish School at Taymouth Castle in 1950.

At local authority level on the ground the response to recruitment was elo-



The Rescue Training Ground at Falfield, Gloucestershire, 1949. Associated Newspapers



A R House



A R House



A R House

Examples of the vehicles issued to the Civil Defence Corps;  
Above Left: Rescue Section  
Above Right: Ambulance Section  
Left: Signals Section



Train crash at Harrow & Wealdstone Station, October 1952



Refreshments and a smile from the ladies of the WVS for the injured and rescuers at the Lewisham train crash, December 1957.



WVS soup kitchen, using Soyer boilers, serving East Coast flood victims in Canning Town, London, 1953.



Pantglas Junior School, Abervan, Glamorgan. A slag heap collapsed onto the school killing 116 children and 28 adults.

Associated Newspapers

recruiting and training women for the ARP services, and to help bring home to the minds of all women what air attack might mean. This work evolved into welfare work in connection with civil defence and the name evolved into WRVS for Civil Defence. With the formation of the Civil Defence Corps in 1949 the WRVS resumed its responsibility as an auxiliary Civil Defence service and gave its services to local authorities particularly in connection with recruiting and training for the Welfare section of the Corps. More than 53,000 members of WRVS enrolled in that section, work for which the average WRVS member was particularly suited through the network of centres throughout the country from which every member could make even the smallest contribution of help. The late Dowager Marchioness of Reading, for many years Chairman of WRVS, said 'We look at ourselves as the handmaidens of the local authorities – prepared to help them not only with civil defence (for war) but with any other responsibilities where women's help can be of the most value'. She was, of course, referring to any peacetime emergency where WRVS members work as part of a team to provide hot drinks, meals, open temporary rest centres and generally provide comfort and help to those in distress.

The greatest scheme the WRVS embarked on was the 'One in Five' talks through which they brought simple information about the hazards of nuclear war to one of five women of this country. The scheme was for trained authorized speakers from the WRVS to give three short talks; how to protect home and family, how to be independent, and how to care for the sick in the home; to small groups of women in their own environment, and to encourage this information to be passed on to others. The target was to inform a total of three million women throughout the country, without any obligation on them to enrol directly in the Civil Defence Corps or any other organization. Unfortunately this remarkable initiative ran up against the organized invective of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and although many women continued to brave the vicious attacks, the scheme was eventually wound down.

### **Civil Defence Duties in Peacetime**

Throughout the period of its existence the Civil Defence Corps did not need to wait for war to prove its value. In the appalling rail disasters at Harrow and Wealdstone, Lewisham, Sutton Coldfield, the earlier flood tragedy at Lynton and Lynmouth, the East Coast floods and the catastrophe at Aberfan, there are records of selfless devotion to duty. It was clearly manifest at all these incidents, that the presence on the spot at the earliest possible moment of personnel, disciplined and well trained in their own particular jobs, working under experienced and level headed leadership, turned chaos almost at once into order and efficiency. There was the most powerful argument for the establishment, everywhere in our midst, of large numbers of men and women well trained in the work of rescue, first aid, fire-fighting or emergency feeding. The disasters proved abundantly that the lines

quent. At the end of June 1950 the Corps in England and Wales was 31,000 strong. Six years later, by the end of March 1956, the total strength was 330,000 in spite of continuous weeding of non-effective members. The training was usually undertaken locally by highly qualified instructors most of whom has been trained at one of the three Technical Training Schools.

### **The New Elizabethan Age**

In 1953 HM The Queen took on the titular title of 'Head of the Civil Defence Corps'. This was one of her Majesty's last public acceptances before her coronation. It was then hoped that this honour to the Corps would do much to establish the status and importance, the dignity and prestige that '...are the rightful inheritance of a service which is both necessary and worthy'.

In the early years, 1948/50 the implications of nuclear warfare had not been fully appreciated. Training was mainly based on the experiences of the 1939/45 wars and was limited to rescue, first aid, fire fighting, protection against high explosive missiles, biological and chemical forms of warfare and the general background of atomic warfare as then visualized.

### **A New Syllabus**

By 1954 it had become evident that radical change in the scope and technique of instruction courses at the schools was imperative if the Civil Defence Corps were to be ready to deal with the immense problems of devastation, casualties and human suffering which a war involving nuclear weapons would create. Consequently, in 1954, following a high level conference of all instructional staff at the Civil Defence College, a 'new look' in Civil Defence training emerged. All types of courses and syllabuses of instruction were completely reorganized and extensive modifications in techniques and equipment came into being. The schools were the obvious centres for carrying out trials and experiments with equipment and vehicles for Civil Defence purposes. For example, the Rescue Manpack equipment was trialled for many months and then came into operational use to develop a full mobile capability for the Rescue teams.

A qualifying certificate from any of the schools was a highly prized possession, and deservedly so, for the work was intensive, and the examinations searching. To obtain a pass certificate the students had to obtain 65% in each test; oral, written and teaching ability. Those who achieved 80% in each test were awarded a 'Special' certificate. By 1954, 9,580 students had passed through the schools, of which 77.1% qualified, 10.4% reached Special grade and 4.8% obtained a restricted certificate. Every effort was made to bring as much practical work as possible, and to relate instruction to the tasks the Civil Defence Corps might need in operations. Exercises, particularly, were designed to produce realism and situations requiring prompt decisions and action. In addition, special training for officers of the various sections within the Civil Defence Corps was introduced.



These courses lasted five days; were intensive, informative and introduced a degree of tactics hitherto outside the scope of the Civil Defence Schools.

### The Role of the SIO's

A new part of Civil Defence was the establishment of volunteer Scientific Intelligence Officers (SIO's) who had the highly important role of giving advice and technical assistance to controllers at all levels. It was recalled that, during the second world war, a scientific organization of senior gas advisers and gas identification officers was set up to detect and identify lethal gases if chemical warfare was used against us. When the Civil Defence Service was reconstituted it was decided that this system must be revived and extended to cover all aspects of modern warfare. Originally called Technical Reconnaissance Officers the name was changed to Scientific Intelligence Officer (SIO) since the former title was no longer regarded as adequate or an accurate description of either the nature or importance of the SIO functions.

### The Defence of Industry

A further element to Civil Defence, and to the army of civil defence volunteers, was the formation of Industrial Civil Defence and the establishment of industrial civil defence units complementary to and working in close cooperation with the Civil Defence Services established by statute under the 1948 Civil Defence Act. These services became the Industrial Civil Defence Service. Basically, industry and commerce would be

### Recruitment

There were many campaigns both nationally and locally. There were, for example, advertisements, posters, displays and open days. The Post Office joined in with slogan cancels on the mail of which these are just 2 examples from 1957 and 1962.



### Civil Defence Long Service Medal

Instituted in March 1961, only 14,164 of the UK medal were awarded to Corps, AFS, NHS Reserve and UKWMO personnel. A variant was issued in Malta, Gibraltar and Hong Kong.

Ribbon: Blue with narrow yellow, red & green stripes.



5 October 1957 Sir Sidney Kirkman G.C.B., K.B.E., M.C.,  
Director General Civil Defence, opening the new Dudley CD HQ

H Cartwright Archive

responsible for the protection of their own infrastructure and to safeguard their own employees. A system of mutual support was advocated between factories and plants.

By 1956 over 200,000 volunteers were engaged in industrial civil defence. 50% of industries developed an effective interest and were fully engaged in training volunteers. British Railways had a special coach to tour the network for training purposes. The National Coal Board had 20,000 volunteers under training in addition to their normal mines rescue service. Heavy industry, public utilities, food suppliers and the medical services all had a clear-cut and obvious role in the restoration of conditions essential for the survival of life after nuclear war. West London's largest and best equipped Industrial Civil Defence group, at D Napier and Sons Acton works, had 250 volunteers giving up two nights a week and two Saturdays per month to train. They also formed Britain's first Ladies rescue team.

### WRVS for Civil Defence

The Womens Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS) must also be mentioned as a recognized and established service and an auxiliary to the Civil Defence Corps. Many people did not remember that the WRVS started before WWII as the WVS (the Royal being awarded in 1966) to help local authorities with the work of